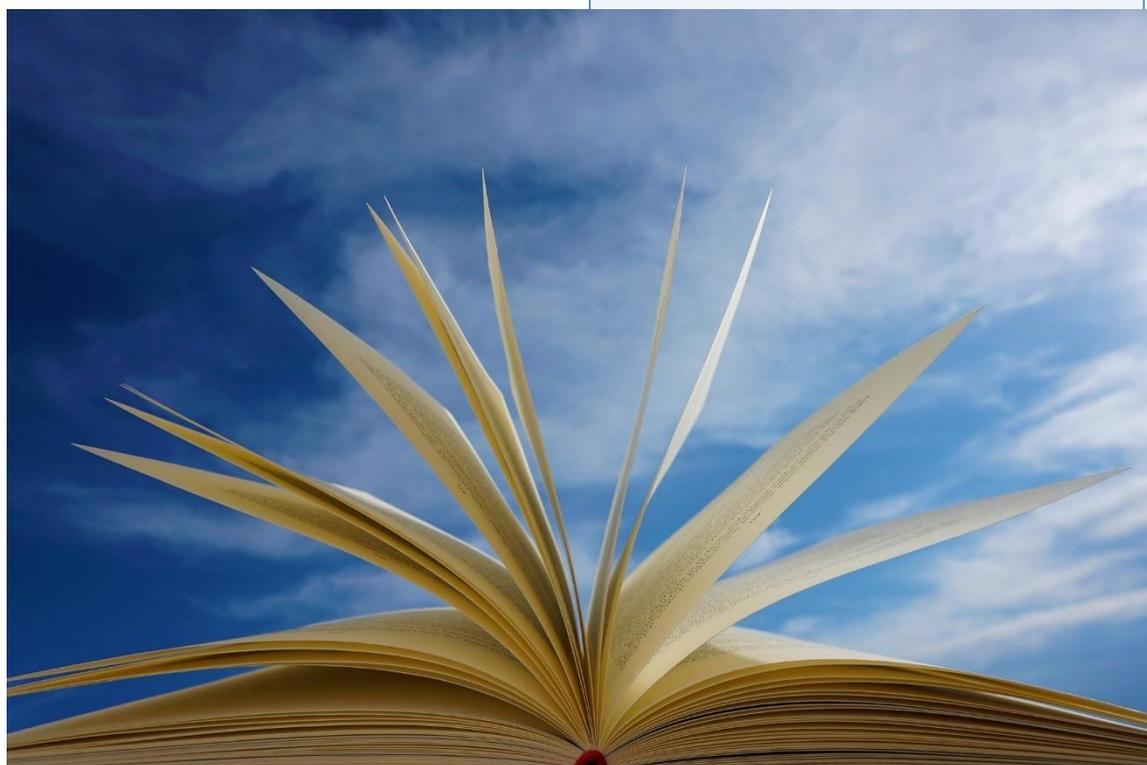


# Writers for Peace Committee

Newsletter

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January 2022

## Welcome to the World of 2022

Welcome to the World of 2022 and to the first issue of the Writers for Peace Committee of PEN International.

The Writers for Peace Committee - also called in our official working languages “Comité des Écrivains pour la Paix or “Comité de Escritores por la Paz” - was created in 1984, an era during which writers found it especially difficult to collaborate across the East–West divide of the Cold War. The Committee’s founding members recognized the need to bring writers together to exchange ideas, especially when most other doors were closed. It became a safe haven throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s (during the Balkan wars and other political conflicts) for writers who wished to tell their stories with the knowledge that their voices will be heard.

Every spring the committee meets in Bled, Slovenia, for its annual conference. PEN writers from around the world come together to discuss issues of conflict, peace and freedom of expression, and to create a space for dialogue between writers from all parts of the world – especially from regions in conflict. The initial reasons for establishing it remain all too relevant and put already on your agenda that we will meet in Bled during the second week of May 2022.

Let me tell you that this newsletter was written by the team of the Committee, meaning three Vice-Presidents, Tienchi Liao-Martin (PEN China, in exile in Germany), Simon Mundy (PEN Wales), and Franc Mikša (PEN Slovenia), with the help of the Secretary-General, Edvard Kovač (PEN Slovenia), Sergio Roic (Swiss Italian PEN, Lugano), Tanja Tuma (President of PEN Slovenia) and Sara Katarina Zver (PEN Slovenia). I am very glad to work with them as President since 2018 (based in Paris, former President of French PEN, current Vice-President of Pen Monaco and member of the French speaking Swiss PEN Center).

During the past three years, we have been working on the fight against hate speech and all forms of discrimination, the situation in Balkans, the treatment of migrants, the protection of cultural sites, the authoritarian surveillance in Asia, and in particular in the People's Republic of China, the prevention of armed conflicts and wars (like the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, Kazakhstan, Ethiopia), the fight against dictatorships, in particular through cybersurveillance. We will try to give you accurate news about our values and fights, as you will find hereby.

And, of course, receive our best wishes for 2022.

Emmanuel Pierrat, President of the Writers for Peace Committee



PEN International **Writers for Peace Committee**  
**Comité des écrivains pour la paix** du PEN international  
Mednarodni odbor **Pisatelji za mir**

# The 54<sup>th</sup> International Writers meeting at Bled

By Slovene PEN and WfPC

Writers for Peace committee together with the Slovene PEN center is organizing the **54th International meeting of writers in Bled**, that will take place **11th and 13th of May 2022**. Although we sincerely hope to see as many of you as possible in person, we will also enable online participation that will be open to all of our members.

Like every year, the focus will be on the PEN International Writers for Peace Committee Meeting that will sit in three sessions:

- 11 May - General Assembly of WfPC.
- 12 May - round tables about the following topics: *Failing Global Ethics: The Writer's Response, The five horsemen of the Apocalypse: covid, hate speech, violent protests, global warming, and the decline of democracy and Bosnia and all the "Bosnias" in the world*.
- 13 May - closing meeting of the WfPC to finalise materials for the PEN Annual Congress.

A detailed programme will be available after 1st February 2022.

If you are interested in attending the 54th International Writers' Meeting at Bled, please send us the completed registration form by the **10th of April 2022**.

If you want us to resend you the invitation and registration form, please contact us on [penwritersforpeace@penslovenia-zdruzenje.si](mailto:penwritersforpeace@penslovenia-zdruzenje.si).



## Topics for the round tables

As usual, we will discuss and exchange views during round tables. Due to numerous difficult situations in our region and around the world, we decided to hold three round tables instead of two, as in the previous years.

### **Failing Global Ethics: The Writer's Response** (topic chosen by the WfPC)

Too many governments around the world, whatever their size, are behaving with increasingly cynical disregard for human rights, liberal democracy and freedom of expression. This is a threat to peaceful co-existence and individual liberty. The ethical basis of the world order is being undermined by many of the very states that established it after World War II

### **The five horsemen of the Apocalypse: covid, hate speech, violent protests, global warming, and the decline of democracy** (topic chosen by Slovene PEN)

The epidemic has exposed the social contradictions of capitalism. Even some countries that we often perceive as successful democracies, are turning in the direction of authoritarian rule, violence and frightening social phenomena. Economic censorship, restrictions on freedom of expression, even the persecution of creators under the guise of epidemiological measures are on the rise. The promotion of hate speech in political discourse, in the media, on social networks and during violent protests are leading to the disintegration of democracy. Simultaneously, the exploitation of nature and people for the benefit of a handful of the richest has exceeded all boundaries and threatens the decline of civilisation, if not the destruction of the planet. How are writers affected by all these social phenomena?

### **Bosnia and all the "Bosnias" in the world** (topic chosen by Slovene PEN)

Bosnia and Herzegovina together with the wider region (meaning Montenegro, Macedonia and Kosovo) is once again in the grip of nationalism and dangerous social, interethnic and interreligious frictions. With slow accession to the European Union, there is a great danger of renewed conflict and a new war. Hatred has also escalated in other crisis areas around the world, based on religious, racial and national intolerance. How can writers motivate countries where there is peace to act? What can writers do to help establish and maintain world peace?

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*The meeting is organised by Slovene PEN that holds all financial responsibility towards its sponsors and public financial sources, i.e. Slovenian Book Agency, European Union - Social fund, company Krka d.d., municipalities of Bled and of Ljubljana.*

*Writers for Peace Committee is meeting at Bled since its foundation in 1984 (altogether 54 years).*

# Hustling for Peace

By Sergio Roïc and Sara K. Zver

ChiassoTV in collaboration with the Writers for Peace Committee of PEN International presents a series of television interviews led by journalist and writer Sergio Roic. During the interviews, he speaks to authors from all over the world about freedom of expression and new frontiers towards peace in today's ever-changing socio-cultural landscape.

Sergio Roïc is the vice president of Swiss Italian and Reto-Romansh Centre and a representative of PEN's Writers for Peace Committee.

The following four episodes are available for the moment:

1. Interview about the technologies and surveillance since the Covid pandemic with **Tienchi Liao Martin**, vice president of Writers for Peace committee and member of the member of the Independent Chinese PEN. Please follow this [link](#).
2. Interview about the claims of sovereignty and the dangers of autocracy with **Simon Mundy**, vice president of Writers for Peace committee and member of the member of Wales PEN Cymru. Please follow this [link](#).
3. Interview about the difficult situation of the Macedonian language in Bulgaria as well as Balkan conflict with **Edvard Kovač**, general secretary of the Writers for Peace committee and a member of Slovene PEN. Please follow this [link](#).
4. Interview about the freedom of speech and democracy in the Balkans with **Tanja Tuma**, president of Slovene PEN. Please follow this [link](#).
5. Interview about the conservation, value, importance and destruction of cultural heritage with Emmanuel Pierrat, president of the Writers for Peace committee, Vice-President of Pen Monaco and member of the French speaking Swiss PEN Center. Please follow this [link](#).

The full list of episodes can be found [here](#).



# Statement on the unrest in Kazakhstan

By WfPC Board

The Writers for Peace Committee of PEN International is viewing with concern the unrest in Kazakhstan and the measures being taken by the government to quell the protest. While violence on either side, by protestors or the authorities, helps no-one, there are clearly legitimate social and policy concerns in the nation that need to be addressed. We stress that it is at exactly these times, when solutions are complicated and difficult, that the free flow of ideas and accurate information can provide a way forward.

Kazakhstan hosted an international PEN meeting about literature, in Almaty, less than four years ago, signalling a readiness to embrace the need for freedom of expression and the realisation that writers, even when highly critical, are contributors to a healthy discourse about a nation's history and future. We look to current leaders to hold to that realisation and not to be tempted to opt for a return to repression - as has been seen so tragically in Belarus, Myanmar, Russia and China.

The Writers for Peace Committee knows that Kazakhstan is a pivotal country for the stability of Central Asia and urges the government and regional powers to act with understanding, restraint and imagination. We are certain that writers are ready to help national recovery and international dialogue.

The President and Vice-Presidents,

Writers for Peace Committee



# Julian Assange – one of the most persecuted publishers in the world

By Tanja Tuma

The publishing of WikiLeaks revealed not only various cynical manipulations of governments (democratic and autocratic) towards their citizens, it also showed the double attitude towards the human rights and international conventions regarding the war law. It put out the methods like coaxing weaker states in the diplomatic arena, military commands that kill children and two Reuter reporters unintentionally, jailing facilities where POW are systematically tortured and humiliated, etc. And the world should believe that it is “alles ok in Guantanamo Bay”, as German songwriter Rinhard Mey sings, “all is ok in Guantanamo Bay.” The documents published by WikiLeaks show what EU Schengen borders display every single day that for governing politics human rights are just a phrase superficially used in their lengthy speeches.

Julian Assange believed that public must know all this and that freedom of speech would protect him. He has let this genie of secrecy out of the bottle and paid a very high price for it. False charges for a sexual assault, financial blockade of his operations, personal confinement in inhuman conditions, threatening extradition to the US where all he has published about the foreign prisoners most probably awaits him. PEN International has been supporting his right to publish from the very beginning, particularly [English and American PEN](#). Everywhere in the world, PEN members are trying to advocate for his basic rights. By condemning the persecution of Assange, we condemn the prosecution of every journalist and publicist in the world who find themselves under pressure from governments that want to conceal the truth. Recently, German PEN has nominated Julian Assange his honorary member, and the Slovene PEN followed.

The WikiLeaks platform presents a mirror of the world politics. Blaming the mirror for the distorted image that they don't like is pointless. Locking up the man who holds the mirror is against every democratic principle.

Tanja Tuma, president of Slovene PEN

Member of PIWWC Board



## Our new website

By Sara K. Zver

Our new website is online and available on this [link](#).

You will be able to find there the latest news concerning our work and projects, manifestos and other important documents, meeting reports as well as all up-to-date information about the 54<sup>th</sup> International Writer's Meeting in Bled.

Once completely finished, the website will be available in English, French and Slovenian.

## Our new logo

By Sara K. Zver



Our new logo represents the nib of the fountain pen holding an olive branch as a symbol of peace.

It shows that the primary mission of our work and activism is the focus on world peace. We try to achieve it with constructive dialog, peaceful protest and relentless fight for freedom of expression.

We are working under the wing of PEN International, with friends and supporters from nearly all PEN Centers worldwide.

## Questions or suggestions?

Please feel free to reach out to us in English, French or Slovenian via the email [penwritersforpeace@penslovenia-zdruzenje.si](mailto:penwritersforpeace@penslovenia-zdruzenje.si).

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Writers for Peace Committee - Newsletter No. 1, January 2022

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Editor : Sara Katarina Zver

