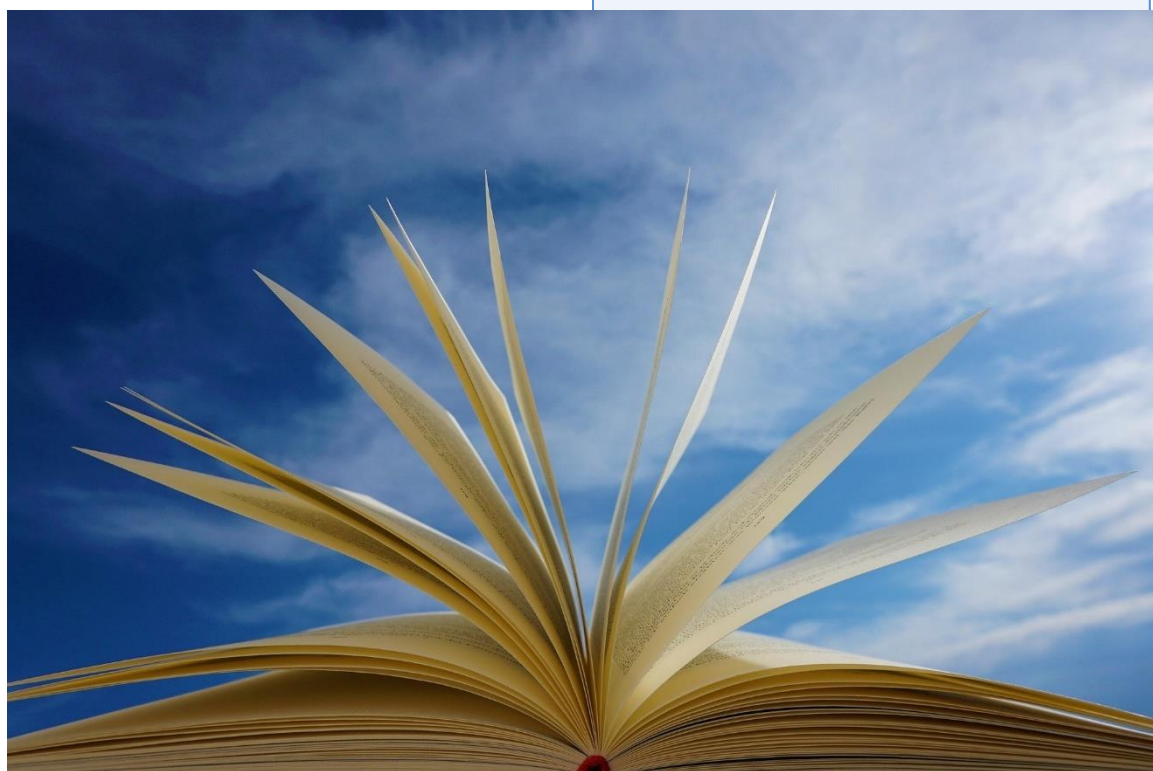
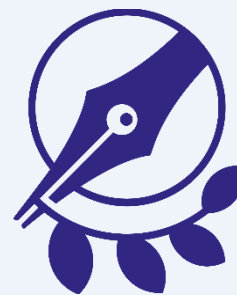


Writers for Peace Committee

Newsletter



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Writers in the world at war

The world is at war: from Yemen to Ukraine, from Tigray to Libya. The world is dominated by undemocratic regimes, that are fuelling hate speech and fake news as well as causing migration and uprooting.

Putin, Bolsonaro, Xhi, Erdogan, Kim Jong Un, Orban, Miguel Diaz-Canel and many others rule over a large part of the planet, while Marine Le Pen and her kind threaten the other regimes.

All of this justifies all the more the activities and the work of the Writers for Peace Committee of PEN International, which continues to react to each bad news or sudden threat and to follow and write tirelessly about difficult situations already identified.

In this terrible start to the year 2022, the Board of the Committee publicly stands with Ukraine. The Board also published a new statement on Tigray, posted two episodes of the program Hustling for Peace, the one with Andreï Kurkov (our friend and President of Pen Ukraine) and the other devoted to Julian Assange.

We are also keeping in mind all other problems related to the work of the Writers for Peace Committee, such as the situation in Belarus, the proliferation of hate speech, the links between new technologies and surveillance in Asia, social movements and protests, the protection of cultural sites that are threatened by conflict, the fate of migrants or the situation of minorities in the Balkans, as well as the instability of this region.

This makes it all the more necessary to meet, in large numbers, this spring in Bled, in this idyllic place in Slovenia that we have used for decades. Our team has created a very dense agenda for the meetings of the Committee's General Assembly, to which are added four round tables, readings, screenings and meetings organized together with PEN Slovenia. You are therefore more than welcome to join us for Bled meeting. This meeting is contributing to our success and testifies about our activism, the need for the literature and about our dedication to the freedom of expression and a peaceful world.

Emmanuel Pierrat

Chair 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**

Les écrivains dans un monde en guerre

Le monde est en guerre : du Yémen à l'Ukraine, du Tigré à la Lybie. Le monde est dominé par des régimes peu démocratiques, nourrissant les discours de haine et les fake news, provoquant des migrations et des déracinements.

Poutine, Bolsonaro, Xhi, Erdogan, Kim Jong Un, Orban, Miguel Diaz-Canel et tant d'autres règnent sur une large partie de la planète, tandis que Marine Le Pen et ses semblables menacent les régimes épargnés. Cela justifie d'autant les activités et les travaux du Comité des Écrivains pour la Paix du Pen International, qui n'a cessé de réagir et d'œuvrer à chaque mauvaise nouvelle ou menace soudaine tout en suivant et écrivant sans relâche sur les situations déjà identifiées.

En ce terrible début d'année 2022, le Bureau du Comité a ainsi pris plusieurs fois publiquement position sur la situation en Ukraine, a publié une nouvelle déclaration sur le Tigré, mis en ligne deux épisodes de l'émission Hustling for Peace, l'un avec Andreï Kourkov (notre ami Président du Pen Ukraine) et l'autre consacré à Julian Assange.

Mais nous n'avons pas perdu de vue les problématiques chères au Comité des Écrivains pour la Paix tels que la situation en Biélorussie, la prolifération des discours de haine, les liens entre les nouvelles technologies et la surveillance en Asie, les mouvements en sociaux et de contestation populaire, la protection des sites culturels menacés par les conflits, le sort des migrants ou la situation des cultures minoritaires au sein des Balkans, comme l'instabilité de cette région.

Cela impose d'autant de se réunir, nombreux, ce printemps à Bled, ce lieu idyllique de Slovénie, comme nous en avons l'usage depuis des décennies. Notre équipe plurielle a concocté un agenda très dense aux réunions de l'Assemblée générale du Comité, auxquels s'ajoutent des tables-rondes, lectures, projections et rencontres organisées avec le Pen Slovénie. Vous êtes donc tous plus que les bienvenus aux rencontres de Bled, cet événement contribuant de remporter un vif succès qui témoignent de notre vitalité, comme de la nécessité de la littérature et de nos engagements en faveur de la liberté d'expression et d'un monde pacifié.

Emmanuel Pierrat,

Président du Comité des Écrivains pour la Paix du Pen International

A Summary of Freedom of Press and Human Rights Situation in Asia

By Tienchi Martin-Liao

Following the widespread pandemic in 2020, Covid-19 still dominated the economic and daily life of people in Southeast Asia in 2021.

The whole world suffered economic pain, mass joblessness, and even hunger as trade and tourism slowed down under virus restrictions. China has closed the border with Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam and North Korea, which devastated those countries that rely on Chinese trade and investment. I would like to examine several regions to describe the worrying situation there.

Uighurs and Turkic-people in Xinjiang

The 12 million Uighurs of Xinjiang have been heavily controlled by the Chinese Communist government since 1949. The Muslim minority have suffered especially under Xi Jinping's Administration since 2012. The Communist party chief Chen Quanguo has ruled Xinjiang with an iron hand for the last 5 years – including mass internment camps (re-education camps), force labour, sexual attacks and coercive birth restrictions which are happening daily in the area. The US, Canada, the Netherlands, the UK and some other countries have described the treatment of Uighurs and Turkic people as genocide and crimes against humanity. More than 1.8 million Muslims have been detained in camps. The US and its allies have imposed sanctions or trade controls targeting firms that produce goods using forced labour in Xinjiang. Yet China has ignored the international protest and reacted with counter-sanction against EU politicians, think tanks and individuals.

Recently (December 26, 2021) Governor Chen has been removed from the position and replaced by Ma Xingrui, governor of the coastal economic province Guangdong. Will the severe human right abuses in Xinjiang stop through the change of the governor? There is no sign of a positive trend yet. China continues its arrogant and aggressive foreign policy, rejects any criticisms from abroad on Xinjiang. The people of Tibet as well as Inner Mongolia faced intensifying surveillance and repression of their Buddhist practices in 2021, along with an aggressive campaign to reduce and eliminate education in the Tibetan and Mongolian languages in favour of Chinese. Beijing's policy against these minorities procreates hostility and hatred among the other nationalities and the Han Chinese.

Hong Kong

The Hiobsbotschaft/bad news from the media environment in Hong Kong continues to shock the world. Following the shutting of Apple Daily in June 2021, and Stand News on 29.12. 2021, the independent Hong Kong news site Citizen News closed down on 4 January 2022.

In June, the Hong Kong government used the imported Security Law to shut down Apple Daily, the largest Chinese language opposition newspaper, and prosecuted 12 journalists. Jimmy Lai, the founder of Apple Daily was sentenced to 14 months because of his role in an unauthorised assembly in 2019. In December 2021 he was again sentenced to an additional 13 months over his violation for joining the banned vigil on 4 June 4.

Stand News is an independent, non-profit, news website in Chinese founded in 2014. On 29 December six current and former members of Stand News were arrested under the accusation of “conspiracy to publish seditious publications”. Around 200 police officers raided the office and confiscated files and documents of the company.

Citizen News is an independent, non-profit, digital news website established in 2017, supported by a group of experienced media professionals. I (Tienchi Martin-Liao) was a columnist on this website.

The Hong Kong governor Carrie Lam is determined to strangle the critical voices and to terminate the freedom of press in Hong Kong. Since the imposing of the Security Laws on 1 July 2020, 132 people have been arrested, including journalists, pro-democracy politicians, labour union activists, student leaders and civil citizens. Hong Kong has been downgraded to a typical Chinese city, so that the Communist Party has complete control of public opinion. The promised “one country, two systems” is only empty words.

Taiwan is under military threat

Taiwan is on the front line in the fight for democracy as the threat from China grows every day, its president Tsai Ing-wen has said. According to the report by Apple Daily in Taiwan, there were 5704 military aeroplanes invading the ADIZ (Air defence identification zone) of Taiwan in 2020. In average there are 1.65 daily incursions of Taiwan's airspace. Some days, they come in groups, say over 40 or 50, to break through the ADIZ. Taiwan sends up its own planes to warn them. It is actually a miracle that no real unexpected military conflict happened.

China claims that Taiwan is a part of China, despite the island republic being a democratic and prosperous free country. The military threat is not only in the air, but also on the sea. The China's Navy ships are crossing the Taiwan Strait and circling the island too. China uses fatigue tactics of the daily military threats hoping to weary the defence forces in Taiwan. People are tired of the warnings. One day, when the real attack comes, China may try to take over Taiwan with a blitzkrieg.

The Taiwanese believe that the US will rescue them in a critical situation, yet after the experience of Iraq and Afghanistan, can people still trust US politicians?

Russian President Vladimir Putin started the invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. This unjust war has destroyed the country and killed 1417 and wounded 2038 civilian people (stand of April 2, OHCHR) in Ukraine and forced over 400 million people abandon their home to become refugees. How many Russian soldiers are killed is unknown, the estimation indicates up to ten thousand. There is no sign of the ending of the war. Would Taiwan have the same fate as Ukraine and become the victim of the Chinese hegemony in the near future? No one can tell, but the fear is eligible.

China and endangered females

Citizen journalist and lawyer Zhang Zhan from Shanghai has been imprisoned since May 2020 after she went to Wu Han and reported on the city's lockdown in January 2020. Zhang Zhan took pictures of the hospital, the crematorium and the empty city. She talked to a few people who she could find and posted the information on WeChat. Three weeks later she was arrested and thrown in jail. Zhang was sentenced to four years at the end of 2020. The 38 year old Zhang refused to accept the accusation, she said she has not violated the law. So she started a quasi hunger strike half a year ago. She was forced fed through the nostril. Her health deteriorated rapidly in prison. She lost so much weight that she now weighs less than 40 kilos. Her family believes that she is dying and has asked for help. Report without Borders, along with dozens of other NGOs have urged Beijing, without success to release her for medical parole. Very recently, the family of Zhang has released information that her health condition has improved.

School teacher Li Tiantian of Hunan province has supported for Shanghai journalism lecturer Song Gengyi, of Aurora College, who encouraged her students to verify official accounts of the Nanjing massacre. Song was denounced by one of her students, therefore was fired by the college. Li posted her supportive words to colleague Song. Thereupon the local officer of Li Tiantian's home town, Shaba, came to her and forced her into a psychiatric hospital. They alleged that she has "mental problems" and needs care. Ms. Li is pregnant, she issued a cry for help on Weibo on 20 December 2021. There was a furious reaction on the Chinese internet about the authority's inhuman act and called for her release.

Tennis Star Peng Shuai disappeared for a certain time after she posted a text online in November 2021. Her allegation of sexual assault against a member of Politburo Standing Committee of CCP, Zhang Gaoli, has raised public attention. International protest was so alarming that Beijing reacted clumsily. She was shown in public having a video talk with Thomas Bach, the German IOC chief, weeks later. As the protest continued, a six minute video of an interview with Peng Shuai was published by a Singapore newspaper. It is said she is free, she is happy, she has never been sexually assaulted... China is under pressure because of the international reproach of its human rights situation and the treatment of a globally recognised sports woman. Voices calling for a boycott of the Winter Olympics in China this February are becoming louder.

The Olympic is over, now the whole world is watching the Russian Ukraine war. The Chinese government does not blame the invader, and isn't joining the Western sanction against Russia. Its' ambiguous attitude to the perpetrator and the victims is an indication of Beijing's political intention to the Uighurs and to Taiwan.

Tienchi Martin-Liao, Vice-Chair of the Writers for Peace Committee

Second Statement on War in Ukraine

By WfPC

The Writers for Peace Committee of PEN International continues to deplore the actions of the Russian regime and its invasion of Ukraine. We call for an unconditional return to peace.

The bombardment and occupation of Ukraine by Russian forces is now several weeks old. All the diplomatic solutions through international fora have been dismissed with disdain, the calls for peace brushed away. For the people living in Ukraine, this winter will go down as one of the darkest in their history, comparable to the twin assaults by Hitler and Stalin, with whom Russia's Putin seems desperate to be equated. It is surely a psychopathic ambition. For Ukraine's heritage - its archives, libraries, museums, architecture and monuments - the artillery and missile attacks are truly tragic. If Russia truly believed its own heritage is entwined with Ukraine's, the destruction would cease immediately.

Russia's armies moved in regardless of the suffering of Ukrainians or the cost to ordinary Russians, which will be profoundly distressing and may last a generation. All Russians' freedoms - to express their thoughts, write, perform, communicate openly, travel and discover truth - have been crushed by their own President, along with their incomes and savings.

For those who have fled Ukraine, life has become fearful and uncertain. Their plans are in ruins, their families separated, their homes abandoned or destroyed. Only boys and the over-sixties men have been allowed to cross borders. The rest returned to fight Russian soldiers who had little idea why they had been told to attack people they had always regarded as friends. The absurdities of vicious nationalism, encountered so grimly in the Balkans 30 years ago, have now gripped Russia.

Meanwhile, the Chinese leadership stands by, glad to have the international heat on them dialled down for their internal repression and external callousness. Beijing has launched a propaganda campaign of its own, portraying Putin as a hero. The official tone in China's media is aimed at generating support for the war among the Chinese people. China stands by, waiting for Russia to become economically dependent on them, eager to take up the supplies of energy Europe has started to wean itself off so slowly. It would be good for them to remember the plight of their own parents and grandparents when Japanese imperial armies overran them only 80 years ago, as Russia is doing to Ukrainians now.

Middle-Eastern autocracies similarly delight that Russia has diverted the world's attention away from them. India and Pakistan's leaders hedge their bets, choosing to forget that excusing Putin will infect their own democracies. The rest of the world, already reeling from COVID and climate change, will now suffer too as food prices rise and aid agencies' funds are redirected to Ukraine.

Writers continue to demand that Russia's government withdraws its armies, ships, planes and weapons. Peace is too important to be debased so rudely. As the Writers for Peace Committee of PEN International we can only use words to defend it, as our predecessors did from 1921 onwards. There is no need for war, no justification for aggression. Only by finding common objectives in peace can humanity have a future. Leaders of governments like Russia must stop believing their own megalomaniacal rhetoric. On all continents there are too many heads of government determined to add misery to failure. There is vital work to be done to correct the mistakes of the past, from imperialism to ecological destruction. Stop fighting and get back to your real jobs.

Writers for Peace Committee

15 March 2022



WfPC Continues to Call for Peace in Northern Ethiopia and Surrounding Regions

By WfPC

The Writers for Peace Committee of PEN International continues to call for an end to the war in the Tigray region of Northern Ethiopia and neighbouring areas. Hostilities and attacks on civilians by all sides have resulted in the deaths, injury and displacement of large numbers, many of them women and children.

The United Nations and the African Union have both expressed their concern in several declarations calling for the protection of civilians from hostilities and warning of critical shortages in the Tigray region. Adjacent areas of South Sudan and Eritrea, (desperately poor and prone to conflict themselves) are being impacted too. All sides have been accused of the mass killing of civilians. There is a very high risk of the conflict becoming an intercommunal fight mainly between the Tigray and Amhara ethnic groups.

It is hard to verify claims and therefore is imperative that the Ethiopian government should restore communication to the Tigray region and allow impartial reporting and monitoring of the conflict. There are growing fears that ethnic cleansing and forced deportation is being conducted in several areas under dispute.

Tigray is also already needing to support Eritrean refugees who are desperately depend on monthly rations from UNHCR and on the protection of Ethiopia's Agency for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA). Meanwhile people displaced from their homes and land are becoming destitute and dependent on inadequate aid.

The WfPC recognises that this is just the latest chapter in a longstanding and complicated regional conflict. Nonetheless the aggression shown by both Tigrayan and Federal Ethiopian forces is no way to solve a political problem. We call once again, as we did at the end of 2021, for a ceasefire and a peaceful political solution. We also call for neighbouring countries to refrain from aggravating the hostilities, for free and accurate reporting to be facilitated, and for peace and reconstruction measures to be put in place. Most importantly of all, we call for the harassment of the people of the region to stop.

Writers for Peace Committee

11 April 2022

Hustling for Peace

By Sergio Roïc

Sergio Roïc, the vice president of Swiss Italian and Reto-Romansh Centre and a representative of PEN's Writers for Peace Committee interviewed Ralf Nestmeyer, the vice-president of German PEN. The topic of the discussion is Julian Assange.

To see the full interview, please click [here](#).

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Sergio Roïc recently interviewed Andreï Kurkov, president of PEN Ukraine.

To see the full interview, please click [here](#).

To see the full list of Hustling for Peace episodes, please follow this [link](#).



54th International Writers' Meeting at Bled

By Slovene PEN and WfPC

Despite the unpredictable time in which we find ourselves, we are remaining faithful to the tradition of organising the Bled Meetings. We wish to invite you to the 54th International meeting of writers in Bled, that will take place between 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: PEN stands with Ukraine, 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.

If you are interested in attending the 54th International Writers' Meeting at Bled in person or over the Zoom link, please contact us as soon as possible via the email penwritersforpeace@penslovenia-zdrufenje.si.

Writers for Peace Committee - Newsletter No. 3, April 2022

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