

## INTERNATIONAL PEN CHARTER

The New Zealand PEN Centre has adopted the International PEN Charter:

1. Literature knows no frontiers, and should remain a common currency between nations in spite of political or international upheavals.
2. In all circumstances, and particularly in time of war, works of art, the patrimony of humanity at large, should be left untouched by national or political passion.
3. Members of PEN should at all times use what influence they have in favour of good understanding and mutual respect between nations; they pledge themselves to do their utmost to dispel race, class and national hatreds, and to champion the ideal of one humanity living in peace in one world.
4. PEN stands for the principle of unhampered transmission of thought within each nation and between all nations, and members pledge themselves to oppose any form of suppression of freedom of expression in the country and community to which they belong as well as throughout the world whenever this is possible. PEN declares for a free press and opposes arbitrary censorship in time of peace. It believes that the necessary advance of the world towards a more highly organised political and economic order renders a free criticism of governments, administrations and institutions imperative. And since freedom implies voluntary restraint, members pledge themselves to oppose such evils of a free press as mendacious publication, deliberate falsehood and distortions of fact for political and personal ends.

The New Zealand PEN Centre is headed by our President, and managed by our Representative, Dr Nelson Wattie  
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Our Freedom of Speech Representative is Denys Trussell.

# International PEN

*NZ Society of Authors (PEN NZ Inc)*  
TE PUNI KAITUHI O AOTEAROA



## The New Zealand Society of Authors (PEN NZ INC)

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The New Zealand centre of PEN, the international writers' organisation, was founded in Wellington in 1934 by journalist and writer Pat Lawlor. In 1994, realising that PEN was acting more strongly in the professional interests of writers; the organisation changed its name to the New Zealand Society of Authors (PEN NZ Inc). The new organisation retained the functions and culture of PEN but broadened into an effective advocate for and supporter of writers.

### **International PEN**

Originally founded in 1921 to promote literature, today International PEN has 145 centres in 104 countries across the globe. It recognises that literature is essential to understanding and engaging with other worlds; if you can't hear the voice of another culture how can you understand it?

Their primary goal is to engage with, and empower, societies and communities across cultures and languages, through reading and writing. We believe that writers can play a crucial role in changing and developing civil society. We do this through the promotion of literature, international campaigning on issues such as translation and freedom of expression, and improving access to literature at international, regional and national levels.

### **Freedom of Expression**

International PEN brings together writers, journalists, poets – all those using the written word to promote ideas – in the common belief that it is through this sharing that bridges of understanding can be built between peoples. These bridges cross political, geographical, ethnic, cultural, religious and other divides.

It is for this reason that the protection of the right to freedom of expression – the freedom to express ideas without fear of attack, arrest or other persecution – has been at the heart of PEN's work.

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes the freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

### **Writers in Prison**

The Writers in Prison Committee of International PEN was established in 1960 as a result of mounting concern about attempts to silence critical voices around the world, and an office of volunteers was set up at the PEN head office

in London to gather information and to alert the PEN membership to take action.

The WiPC team alerts the PEN membership about urgent cases, keeps it abreast of developments on individual cases as well as global trends affecting free expression, and gives advice on actions and campaigns. These include writing protest letters, lobbying governments, and raising public awareness. Through writing to families and, where possible, directly to prisoners, PEN members provide encouragement and hope.

### **The New Zealand WiPC is facilitated**

by our Coordinator, Lesley Marshall who can be contacted on [editline@xtra.co.nz](mailto:editline@xtra.co.nz)

### **Writers for Peace**

The International PEN Writers for Peace Committee was founded in 1984 as a response to the difficulties posed to cultural collaboration during the Cold War years. Its key aim was to open doors to peaceful and intellectual cooperation, encouraging the sharing of ideas and writings, during a period when many other doors were closed. During its early years, the Committee's annual meetings in Bled gave space for a democratic dialogue between writers from both East and West, and during the break-up of the former Yugoslavia offered somewhere that writers from these countries could exchange views and tell their stories.

Today it continues to provide a platform for intercultural and literary dialogue and understanding. The Bled Conferences act as a coming together of writers and PEN members from all over the world to discuss and debate many issues that are of concern to the literary community. Themes have included Freedom of Expression as a Means Against Terrorism, Globalisation of the World – Marginalisation of Literature, and The Role of International PEN in the Contemporary World.

### **Translation & Linguistic Rights Committee**

The International PEN Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee was established in Stockholm in 1978 at International PEN's 43rd Congress. Originally called the Programme and Translation Committee, it aimed to encourage and promote the translation of literature from smaller languages into major world languages (including

the three official languages of International PEN – English, French and Spanish) and as a consequence into many other languages as well, both widely-spoken and small languages.

Today, the committee has multiple objectives and functions. Primarily, it focuses on issues of translation and linguistic rights and the effects these issues have on readers and writers across the globe, including at a most basic level access to literature. Concurrently it places great emphasis on the role that literary translation can play in enabling inter-culture dialogue and exchange.

### **Courage Day**

November 15th is an international day of remembrance for those persecuted for telling their stories. In New Zealand it is called Courage Day after James Courage (1903-1963) who had his books banned for their homosexual content, and his grandmother Sarah Courage whose books were burned by neighbours who resented comments she had made about them.

Every year on November 15th branches of the New Zealand Society of Authors (PEN NZ Inc.) hold readings, debates, gatherings or documentary viewings to raise awareness of the issue of freedom of speech and the persecution of writers.

### **Freedom Page**

The New Zealand Society of Authors' website [www.authors.org.nz](http://www.authors.org.nz) has a Freedom Page dedicated to PEN matters. Here you can find articles on freedom of speech, imprisoned writers and information about specific cases from our Writers in Prison Committee together with sample letters for your use.

### **Adopted Prisoner**

The New Zealand Society of Authors has adopted Regis Iglesias Ramirez as an honorary member. A poet, he was arrested in March 2003 and sentenced to 18 years in prison on anti-state charges. International PEN is calling for Iglesias' immediate and unconditional release, along with that of 25 other print journalists, writers and librarians currently imprisoned in Cuba solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression.

Iglesias' details can be found on our website under Writers' Profiles.