

PEN International: Testimonials

'In a world where independent voices are increasingly stifled, PEN is not a luxury, it's a necessity.'

Margaret Atwood, PEN Vice President.

'The Youths' Revolution has demonstrated that both free expression and ideas based on facts are powerful weapons when people are faced with oppression.'

Eqbal Baraka, writer and Egypt PEN President, February 2011.

"Continue - we must continue - with this wonderful task of renewing the hope of writers who are still being held captive, by shouting out to the world their ideas, their truths, and their souls transformed into words."

Cuban writer **Ricardo González Alfonso**, released in 2010 in the seventh year of a 20-year sentence.

'I feel I have a network here of people who would support me if I go into troubles, people who will care and people who understand the loneliness and the solitude of a writer who sometimes has to stand against his society.'

David Grossman, acclaimed Israeli author and activist, Arthur Miller Freedom to Write Lecture at the PEN World Voices Festival PEN World Voices, 2007.

'I vividly recall the wave of solidarity at the turn of the 1980s in protest against my imprisonment. There were protests from friends, playwright colleagues, writers, Amnesty International, and the Writers in Prison Committee of International PEN...whenever some news did manage to find its convoluted way to me...it was always a source of great encouragement and elation in the oppressive conditions of Communist prison.'

Vaclav Havel, , Czech playwright and former President, Letter to the PEN Writers in Prisons Committee, September 2009.

'My respect for this organization [PEN] has no borders and among the organizations that help writers, PEN has been so fierce, so consistent and ferocious in its efforts that is difficult to ignore their worldwide fame and their impact.'

Toni Morrison, 2008 PEN/Borders Literary Service Award.

'When another writer in another house is not free, no writer is free. This, indeed, is the spirit that informs the solidarity felt by PEN, by writers all over the world.'

Orhan Pamuk, Nobel Prize Laureate, Arthur Miller Freedom to Write Lecture at the PEN World Voices Festival, 2006.

'I well remember that when I was in need of what PEN can do, that PEN support here, in America and elsewhere, was colossally important and wonderfully unified, and it really mattered to me a great deal,'

Salman Rushdie, author and former President of PEN America Centre.

'In this age of information overkill literature can still bring the human news, the heart's and mind's news. From China, from Japan, from Cuba, from Iran, literature brings information, the base metal of information, transmuted into the gold of art. And the knowledge of our world is forever altered by such knowledge or alchemy.'

Salman Rushdie, author and former President of PEN America Centre, speaking at the PEN America Conference 'The Power of the Pen: Does Writing Change Anything?', April 2005.

'PEN is a grassroots organization because more than 20,000 writers in over 100 countries belong to it and speak out for literally tens of thousands of writers in countries where, if there were PEN Clubs and they joined it, they will be dead or in prison within three minutes.'

John Ralston Saul, PEN International President, PEN International Writer's Festival 2009.

'In time of division between countries, PEN International is one of the rare institutions to keep a bridge constantly open.'

Mario Vargas Llosa, Former PEN International President and Nobel Laureate.