Making space for the voices and stories of displaced writers
Although I did not come up with this title for our global campaign – Make Space – the more I think about it, the more I find myself agreeing with all its direct meanings and indirect implications.

We are not creating a space out of nowhere, we are making it, as the space is already there. All that we thought that we could do is just point that out, to make it clear, first for ourselves, and then to others, that there is too much space, whether physical or metaphorical, for us all to share.

And as expected, once we are all there, we will start talking, start listening, and most importantly, start understanding.

The space we are making, unlike all other spaces, is not only open for all, it is a round table, where all of us can sit facing one another, one beside another, there is no one left in the corner, there is no one under the table, there is no one who is heading the session. We are all sitting in front of one another, and beside one another, as equals, as friends, as members of one family.

Does it matter?
Is it relevant?
Yes it does, and yes it is.

Although we were late to attend, from her little room and on her own, Anne Frank created a space like that, she spoke, we understood.

From his prison cell, Carl Von Ossietzky made such space.
From his prison cell, Nazim Hikmat, created a space like that, he spoke, we understood.
From her little apartment in Moscow, Anna Politkovskaya made such space.

On their own, from their prison cells, from their own rooms, from their own exiles and homelessness, thousands of heroes are inviting us all to make that space, to wine and dine with them, to exchange opinions with them, to recite poetry and to sing songs with them.

PEN, throughout its long history, has always been attempting to be that space, and today, PEN is responding accordingly to a world that is showing alarming signals of deteriorating into the values and standards of stages in history that we once thought would never return again.

So PEN, with the help of its world-wide networks and partners, decided to make a space. This space and many others to come, where we celebrate our languages, our literary traditions, our thoughts and feelings as equal members of one human family.

Basim Mardan
Writer, Poet, Translator and PEN International Writers at Risk Protection Officer.
Former ICORN resident in Skien, Norway.
PEN is an organisation of writers, poets, novelists, journalists – and for many of us, leaving our homes, our families, our culture, has been a necessary step to protect ourselves and our free expression. Conflict, persecution, discrimination, violence – the reasons for our flight are many.

We have emerged into new environments, had to adapt to different cultures, identities and seek out new audiences for our writing. And our new communities have responded to us. This process – of making space – is one rich in cultural interactions, social adaptations; but also economic and psychological challenges. It is one of uncertainty, requiring commitment and mutual respect from all involved. The values and legal protections provided by our international human rights standards are our guide.

At PEN we have a unique perspective on this process of making space, borne out of our identity as an organisation, our journeys and our longstanding protection work with writers at risk. These elements combine to provide us with a focused and unique perspective on the right to migrate, refugee protections, cultural rights and countering xenophobia.

Our Make Space campaign is an expression of our belief that we can work together to respond to the realities, challenges and opportunities of migration, displacement and protection for writers at risk.

Through our Make Space campaign, we will be:

- Creating opportunities to promote the writing of displaced and refugee writers
- Strengthening voices of displaced writers in global migration debates
- Broadening the impact and reach of our protection work with writers at risk
- Countering xenophobia and hate

Over 50 years working with writers at risk

We want to enable writers to write, and to do that, we need to keep them safe.

Supporting and working in solidarity with writers at risk is an integral part of what we do. It underpins our mission to promote literature and free expression. Since the birth of our Writers in Prison Committee in the 1960s (see box below), identifying and campaigning for individual writers at risk, and enabling routes to safety and resettlement has been a major activity for us.

Writers in Prison Committee

The Writers in Prison Committee (WiPC) of PEN International was set up in 1960 as a result of mounting concern about attempts to silence critical voices around the world through the detention of writers. It works on behalf of all those who are detained or otherwise persecuted for their opinions expressed in writing and for writers who are under attack for their peaceful political activities or for the practice of their profession, provided that they did not use violence or advocate violence or racial hatred.

The work of the WiPC in documenting persecution of writers resulted in the development of PEN’s Case List – an annual record of attacks, imprisonment and persecution of all who use the written word to express themselves, in whatever form.
Member centres of PEN International are active in campaigning for an improvement in the conditions of persecuted writers and journalists. They send letters to the governments concerned and lobby their own governments to campaign for the release of detained writers and for investigations in cases of torture and killings. They also advocate for systemic change to restrictive laws and practices. Through writing to the families and, where possible, directly to prisoners, they provide encouragement and hope.

What is protection work?

Internationally, humanitarian and human rights organisations engage in protection work to safeguard and uphold the rights of individuals threatened by persecution, conflict or violence, in line with international human rights standards. Although not a strictly humanitarian actor, PEN’s protection work for writers at risk is guided by international human rights standards.

At PEN we have a broad understanding of protection work, which includes a range of activities that we engage in to protect writers from harm and enable their free expression:

- we campaign for writers experiencing persecution in their home countries
- we advocate for changes in laws which can have a chilling effect on free expression – such as criminal defamation or anti-terror legislation
- we provide evidence to support asylum applications for writers applying for refugee status

we give out emergency grants to writers

we work with our partners - the International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN) - to provide long-term relocation options to writers at risk

we recognise the literary achievements of writers and provide solidarity to writers at risk through honorary memberships

Through these activities, and many others, we protect and support writers to write, contribute to global literatures and stay safe.

PEN Emergency Fund

Since 1971 the PEN Emergency Fund has been of crucial importance for assisting writers who have been persecuted and are in acute financial need. Many recipients have had to flee their country due to immediate risks to their safety or for urgent medical treatment after imprisonment. Sometimes their families are in distress.

The Fund works closely with the team at PEN International and operates with minimal overheads; the communication lines are short. Money is quickly transferred to the writers who need it, sometimes on the day of application, and the financial support provided has saved lives.

During the recent economic crisis, contributions to the Fund have been reduced significantly, while the number of applications – now about 50 per year – is growing. Donations to the PEN Emergency Fund are urgently needed so that we can continue this important work.

On their own, from their prison cells, from their own rooms, from their own exiles and homelessness, thousands of heroes are inviting us all to make that space, to wine and dine with them, to exchange opinions with them, to recite poetry and to sing songs with them.

Basim Mardan, Writers at Risk Protection Officer, PEN International

The mainstay of the team’s work is conducting research into individual cases, including:

- Establishing their literary credentials by identifying their published work, writings, articles, blogs
- Assessing the level of risk by recording and verifying instances of threats, harassment, physical attacks, arrests, detentions
- Making referrals to ICORN and other local and international protection partners based on our research
- In some cases, providing asylum support letters for writers seeking refugee status
- Providing advice and support to individuals at risk

ICORN

The International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN) has long been one of PEN International’s most important partners. We have been working together since 2006. ICORN is an independent organisation of cities and regions offering shelter to writers and artists at risk, advancing freedom of expression, defending democratic values and promoting international solidarity.

The PEN International Writers at Risk Protection team in London collaborates closely with ICORN on their work with writers applying to join the programme, and many of our Centres support and help to host their local resident writer.

ICORN member cities offer long term, but temporary, shelter to those at risk as a direct consequence of their creative activities. Their aim is to be able to host as many persecuted writers and artists as possible in ICORN cities and together with sister networks and organisations, to form a dynamic and sustainable global network for freedom of expression.

Through the Make Space campaign, PEN International will be working with ICORN to promote the work of guest writers past and present, as well as creating professional creative opportunities for them. What’s more, we will work with our PEN Centres around the world to co-explore the potential of new ICORN cities twinned with PEN Centres, and supported by our membership.

The following is a sample of cases we have worked on in recent years.
Case Studies

AFRICA

Enoh Meyomesse, Cameroon

On 27 April 2015, the award-winning writer and activist Enoh Meyomesse was finally freed from Kondengui Prison in Yaoundé, Cameroon, after almost three and a half years in prison.

‘It’s funny to see the prison from outside’ said Meyomesse shortly after his release to writer Patrice Ngarang who, along with friend Bergeline Domou, spearheaded the campaign for his release back in November 2011.

‘They practically threw me outside. It was quite forceful. But if it is kicking me outside to freedom then there’s nothing to complain about. I don’t have the words to thank you for your unswerving support over all these years.’

More than three years had passed since Enoh Meyomesse was arrested at Nsimalen International Airport in Yaoundé and charged with attempting to organise a coup and armed robbery. Within a matter of months, the coup charges against him were dropped, and by June 2012, no charges remained. Nevertheless, a judge ordered a six-month extension of his detention in order to enable the prosecutor to search for evidence. In December 2012 he was found guilty of armed robbery and illegal sale of gold and sentenced to seven years in prison, charges that were widely believed to be politically motivated. During his period of imprisonment, Meyomesse’s case was successfully referred to a civil court for appeal in 2013 but over 20 appeal hearings were postponed due to legal technicalities.

Meyomesse’s appeal hearing finally began on 30 March 2015. On 16 April, Meyomesse and his lawyer report that Appeals Court acquitted him of the charge of illegal sale of gold, but found him guilty of handling stolen goods - for which he was sentenced to 40 months in prison. Since he had already served more than this term, the court ordered his release. He was finally freed on 27 April 2015. Meyomesse has now lodged an appeal with the Supreme Court seeking his complete acquittal.

The impact of PEN’s solidarity actions - such as letter writing by English PEN and support from German PEN – was powerfully described by Enoh Meyomesse at the PEN International Congress, Liviv in October 2017.

ASIA

Choity Ahmed, Bangladesh

Choity Ahmed is an atheist blogger and poet. Her first articles and reports were published in 1995 in local newspapers in Bangladesh. Soon after, she started writing poems, short stories and essays, which have been published in national dailies, journals and online portals. She began blogging in 2011 in Somewhereinblog.net. In 2015 her first poetry book Daughters Are Not Fluid (Konnyara Jaloja Noi) was published by Anupranan Prokashon, Dhaka. Ahmed has also written scripts for television, and was on the editorial board of Anupranan tromashik, a literary magazine based in Dhaka, and an editor for the Anupranon Prokashon, a secular publishing house.

As a result of her secular writings, Choity Ahmed began receiving hostile messages from Islamic readers from early on in her career as a blogger. But in 2013 the situation for secular thinkers deteriorated in Bangladesh. Amid growing political unrest and harassment, Ahmed left her village in Chittagong district, southwest of the country, and moved to Dhaka with her husband and two young daughters. However, the harassment and threats against her continued, and her husband also left her. Whilst living in Dhaka with her two daughters (then aged eight and three) as a single parent, it was difficult for Ahmed to take adequate security measures. For several months she was forced to live in temporary accommodation with her two children and the strain was taking its toll on their health. In mid-June 2016, Ahmed was attacked whilst in a rickshaw heading to her office. She escaped unharmed, but later that month received a telephone death threat.

Choity Ahmed contacted PEN for assistance in July 2016. In October 2016, Swedish PEN invited her to Sweden for a period of rest and respite, and to give her an opportunity to resume her literary work. PEN secured consent from her ex-husband for the children to be taken out of the country, and with the help of the Swedish Embassy in Dhaka, the PEN Emergency Fund and the EU Temporary Relocation Platform, Choity Ahmed and her two daughters arrived in Sweden in January 2017. The opportunity has helped the family to recover, and has enabled Choity to resume her literary work and to take part in advocacy and knowledge sharing concerning the situation in Bangladesh. Alongside a fellow Bangladeshi blogger in exile, based in Germany, Choity has started a website (www.nari.news) which deals with women’s rights issues and enables writers to practice their freedom of speech without any boundaries.

Swedish PEN have previously hosted other writers at risk (including Bangladeshi bloggers) to enable them to access protection and respite outside their country. Furthermore, PEN’s research documenting the free expression situation in Bangladesh is forming crucial evidence in the asylum hearings of several other Bangladeshi writers – including three ICORN cases - who fled into exile in 2015 and whose cases are now in process.
Irakli Kakabadze, Georgia

Irakli Kakabadze is an award winning Georgian poet, writer and rights activist. He has published more than 50 short stories and essays in Georgian and English newspapers and magazines and is the author of several books including Candidate Jokola, Maskhara and Baudrillard, Medea Rehabilitation Project and Mother Courage of the Caucasus. He chairs the Mahatma Gandhi Foundation Georgia and is the author of the lyrics of a number of internationally acclaimed songs, including ‘Postindustrial Boys’ and ‘Shrnazi Anthem’. Kakabadze has taught at Cornell University, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Taipei Tech University, Centennial College in Canada, Tbilisi State University, Georgian Institute for Public Affairs, and the Georgian American University in Tbilisi. He is also a founding editor in chief of ‘Peace Times’ magazine in Georgia.

In January 2007 Irakli was forced to flee Georgia after receiving anonymous death threats following publication of a critical newspaper editorial. Kakabadze was given protection as writer-in-residence in a Georgia and is the author of the lyrics of a number of internationally acclaimed songs, including ‘Postindustrial Boys’ and ‘Shrnazi Anthem’. Kakabadze has taught at Cornell University, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Taipei Tech University, Centennial College in Canada, Tbilisi State University, Georgian Institute for Public Affairs, and the Georgian American University in Tbilisi. He is also a founding editor in chief of ‘Peace Times’ magazine in Georgia.

In January 2007 Irakli was forced to flee Georgia after receiving anonymous death threats following publication of a critical newspaper editorial. Kakabadze was given protection as writer-in-residence in America Latina (Let’s misbehave: social protest and freedom of expression in Latin America) (Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung, Bogota, 2011) and Kidnapped: Censorship in Honduras (Eva Tas Foundation, 2015). In 2014 she was elected President of the newly established PEN Honduras Centre of which she is a founding member. She also runs and writes for the website pasosdeanimalgrande.com which reports on freedom of expression and human rights in Honduras.

Dina Meza has been subjected to threats and harassment on a regular basis since 2006, when a lawyer who formed part of her team supporting security guards whose labour rights were being violated was killed. Since then, she has reported being followed, watched and threatened, including receiving death threats and threats of sexual violence. She also reports that her communications have been intercepted and her vehicle sabotaged. None of these incidents have been properly investigated. Meza and her family have had to move house several times since 2012 for security reasons and she left Honduras temporarily in 2013 due to her security situation. PEN International believes that she is being targeted for exercising her right to free expression and that her physical security is at risk. Meza’s security situation remains a serious concern.

Despite the pressures of her situation, Dina Meza is a vocal advocate for human rights in Honduras and has promoted freedom of expression in the country, under considerable pressure.

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Abbad Yahya, Palestine

In February 2017 the Attorney General’s office in Palestine ordered the confiscation of all copies of the novel Crime in Ramallah and issued a summons to its author Abbad Yahya, as well as the book’s publisher and its distributor.

Yahya became the victim of a hate campaign on social media. He received death threats and copies of his novel were reportedly burnt in the Gaza strip. He contacted PEN for assistance.

PEN worked with Yahya to obtain consent and prepare a statement regarding his case. PEN’s statement was issued on 15 February 2017 and circulated to Centres and other networks.

With PEN’s assistance (specialist advice, public campaigning and emergency grant) he found temporary refuge, first in the region and then in Germany with German PEN’s exile programme.

During a visit to Palestine later in the year PEN International’s President and Executive Director, together with PEN Palestine President, met with the Attorney General, who agreed to drop the criminal investigation. Efforts continue to lift the banning of the book.

Abbad Yahya’s case highlights the importance of PEN’s protection work for writers in immediate danger. It also touches upon the challenges that the protection team face in supporting displaced writers at risk.

Swedish PEN have previously hosted other writers at risk (including Bangladeshi bloggers) to enable them to access protection and respite outside their country. Furthermore, PEN’s research documenting the free expression situation in Bangladesh is forming crucial evidence in the asylum hearings of several other Bangladesh writers – including three ICORN cases - who fled into exile in 2015 and whose cases are now in process.

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PEN Centres and writers at risk

Few PEN Centres around the world have organised writers at risk programmes, but many work on an ad-hoc and grassroots level to protect and campaign on behalf of individual writers at risk. Most of these Centres consist of one or two individuals working on a voluntary basis to support fellow writers, others have dedicated staff members carrying out this work. Many have significant diplomatic leverage in their own countries, developed over many years, which they are able to utilise on individual cases. The work of PEN Centres is central to our protection activities and is extremely valuable to our mission to enable free expression and the unhampered transmission of thought. Examples include:

**PEN Melbourne, Australia**
- Has had a coordinator for writers at risk work since the inception of the WiPC in 1960
- Has very committed letter writing network that has secured important information from governments on main PEN cases, such as Dareen Tatour
- Has conducting critical campaigning and provided practical support to refugee writers detained on Manus Island, such as Behrouz Boochani

**Swiss German PEN Centre**
- Has a Writers in Exile Programme in Switzerland which provides an apartment and scholarship for a displaced writer for at least a year
- Has a long track record of providing honorary memberships to persecuted or imprisoned writers

**PEN Netherlands**
- Actively advocates for more cities across the Netherlands to join ICORN
- Provides advice and guidance on asylum cases to the Netherlands government, and assists displaced writers to identify temporary protection solutions
- Conducts urgent campaigning on cases of writers at risk aimed at foreign embassies and the Dutch government
- Has a strong focus on the situation for writers in Turkey, and displaced writers from Turkey in the Netherlands

**PEN Canada**
- Has a Writers-In-Exile programme which was started in 2004 which has found 35 placements for exiled writers in Canadian universities, colleges, public libraries and arts and cultural institutions
- Participates in immigration hearings and regularly writes letters of support in immigration cases including writers from Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Honduras, Iraq, Sri Lanka and Turkey
- Applies for emergency relief funds from other organisations for displaced and refugee writers
- Conducts advocacy with the Immigration and Global Affairs departments in relation to expediting cases of writers facing immediate threats due to their work to enable speedy processing

**Slovene PEN**
- Worked from 2004 to promote Ljubljana becoming an ICORN City of Refuge which it did in April 2011. It is currently hosting its fourth writer and hopes to welcome its fifth in September 2018.
- The Centre is actively involved with supporting ICORN resident writers, such as regarding visa procedures, travel and working opportunities, promotion, asylum support, health insurance and assistance
- Organises an annual International Writer’s meeting at Bled, mostly dedicated to the work of Peace Committee
- Slovene PEN has done a lot of campaigning and economic assistance through the Peace Committee, in particular during the Yugoslav Wars.

**English PEN**
- Has been working with writers at risk work since the inception of the WiPC in 1960
- Actively campaigns for writers at risk through letter writing, public statements, public events and on social media
- Provides practical support and guidance to writers in exile through Home Office support letters, emergency funds, and a recently established residency programme – Turkish journalist Ahmet Sik was the first resident of this programme

**Danish PEN**
- Has been working with writers at risk work since the inception of the WiPC in 1960
- Engages in campaigning, adopts honorary members and provides assistance to writers at risk seeking asylum in Denmark.
- Has supported and collaborated with ICORN cities in Denmark since the first one was established in 2009, and works very closely together with ICORN on this field.
- This has included support to a couple of writers seeking asylum and seven ICORN writers - six men and one woman (with another woman writer/artist to arrive soon). They come from the following countries: Zimbabwe (writer), Gambia (journalist), Syria (translator of literature), Iraq (cultural journalist), Iran (writer and academic), Algeria (poet, musician, actor), Sudan (cartoonist).
Our protection work 2012-2017

2012
Number of cases assessed by PEN¹: 31
Cases placed in Cities of Refuge by ICORN: 15 placed, 2 female
From the following countries: Iran (8), Egypt (2), Eritrea, Palestine, Ethiopia, Cuba, Zimbabwe, Iraq and Russia

2013
Number of cases assessed by PEN¹: 31
Cases placed in Cities of Refuge by ICORN: 13 placed, 3 female
Iran (4), Ethiopia (3), Syria (2), Palestine, Egypt, Turkey, Vietnam

2014
Number of cases assessed by PEN¹: 48
Cases placed in Cities of Refuge by ICORN: 15 placed, 3 female
Iran (4), Syria (2), Sudan (2), Eritrea, Iraq, Belarus, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Honduras

2015
Number of cases assessed by PEN¹: 67
Cases placed in Cities of Refuge by ICORN: 27 placed, 5 female
Afghanistan (4), Syria (3), Iran (2), Russia (2), Palestine (2), Turkey (2), Iraq (2), Azerbaijan, Egypt, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, Eritrea, Somalia, Honduras, Cuba, Ethiopia

2016
Number of cases assessed by PEN¹: 93
Cases placed in Cities of Refuge by ICORN: 17 placed, 3 female
Syria (5), Iran (2), Bangladesh (2), Iraq, Georgia, Russia, Azerbaijan, Yemen, Afghanistan, Eritrea, DR Congo

2017
Number of cases assessed by PEN¹: 87
Cases placed in Cities of Refuge by ICORN: 22 placed, 6 female
Iraq (4), Bangladesh (3), Iran (3), Syria (2), Turkey (2), Sudan, Egypt, Libya, DR Congo, Bahrain, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Russia

¹ This number denotes assessments returned to ICORN by PEN International, not the total number of cases processed
Why Make Space? Why now?

Writers, journalists, and translators are on the front-line of critical reporting and storytelling on issues such as conflict, corruption or human rights violations and face increased persecution as a result. Many have to leave their homes to stay safe and continue their writing.

Many PEN members in exile, and writers we support through our protection work, have fled due to persecution for their work as writers. Others migrate as part of larger groups displaced by conflict, war, armed violence, poverty or sudden onset hazards or life-endangering situations caused by climate change.

No one experience is the same - the routes writers take to safety, and the people they encounter are many and varied.

Through our Make Space campaign, we want to hear these stories of migration.

Creating a new home

All displaced people and writers at risk - including asylum-seekers and refugees - require specific legal protection and social support to settle and adapt to their new homes. They are entitled to the full protection of their human rights, regardless of their identity or status. Such support should include, for example:

- Assessment of vulnerability and provision of relevant social and psychosocial support
- Accommodation and financial assistance
- Language classes and support
- Connections to relevant social networks within their new community
- Recognition of skills and qualifications and support to adapt to and access a new job market

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) describes setting in to a host community as "a mutual, dynamic, multifaceted and ongoing process" involving "the conditions for and actual participation in all aspects of economic, social cultural civil and political life".

Through our Make Space campaign, we want to bring people together.

We will also continue our work to ensure more routes to safety for these writers, as well as focusing on their needs in their places of relocation. Through some writers will go on to claim asylum in their new host country, with the aim of acquiring refugee status, others just want the opportunity to relocate to a new environment for a set period of time. The ICORN programme is one such example of a temporary (one - two year) relocation scheme.

Key themes

Through the campaign we will explore a number of key themes; topics which have emerged through our longstanding work with writers in exile. We don’t have all the answers, but we want to start a conversation, develop a mosaic of stories to explore some of the common challenges faced, and ways that they can be overcome.

The role of culture

Our approach is to empower displaced writers and refugee communities as producers of culture, not passive victims or vulnerable recipients.

We see culture as key to integration, and valorising culture as:

- contributing to a climate where migrants and refugees are valued and empowered as individuals with agency and rights
- assisting migrants and refugees to recover from trauma
- enabling work opportunities for migrants and refugees across the creative industries

For example, we support the European Commission’s New European Agenda for Culture, which aims to harness the power of culture and cultural diversity for social cohesion and wellbeing, by promoting cultural participation; supporting jobs, education and skills in the cultural sector and by strengthening intercultural relations to promote peace.

Saying no to xenophobia and hate

Finally, all of these themes are set against an alarming background of rising xenophobia and discrimination against migrants and non-nationals. We see our campaign as needing to take a strong stand against this climate, through storytelling and the creation of alternative narratives around migration and protection.
‘Our world is in crisis. People have always been forced to move against their will: they’ve fled wars and natural disasters, persecution and violence. But never before has the forced movement of people occurred at such a rate. 1 in 113 people in the world today have been driven from their homes. Simultaneously, a rising climate of nationalistic xenophobia among host nations has made resettlement for those who’ve experienced forced displacement increasingly dangerous and uncertain.

We recognise how many displaced people are without the most basic needs of shelter and security, and the urgent necessity in addressing the human rights violations and extreme injustices that so many face. We also acknowledge the disadvantages faced by exiled writers: the fear of suspicion and violence, the difficulties in publishing in different and often hostile linguistic markets, the lack of the basic conditions that allow for the cultivation of creativity, and the absence of familiar networks—the faces, words, streets, songs—that come with being home.

Some of us have been displaced; some of us are refugees and asylum seekers; some of us have lived in exile, or have been forced to go into hiding in our own countries. But we are all writers and use words in ways that can shift and inform the society around us. And – whoever we are – we consciously make space for the stories of displaced communities within our own, we make space for a shared cultural understanding that enriches us and connects us, disrupting the systems of division that alienate and dehumanise. It is time to act, and to act together.

Therefore, we commit to PEN International’s Make Space campaign. Together we must shape a context for free expression in which all voices and stories have worth. Together we must challenge xenophobia and racism. Together we will shape a world with space for everyone and - as writers - it is with words and stories that we start.’

To see the full list of signatories please go to: https://pen-international.org/supporting-writers-in-exile/make-space-campaign/the-make-space-statement

Jennifer Clement
Ngugi wa Thiong’o
Elfriede Jelinek
Ahmedurrashid Tutul
Stephen Fry
Hanan Al-Shaykh
Karl Ove Knausgaard
Salman Rushdie
Ece Temelkuran
Sanna Aoun
Margaret Atwood
Neill Gaiman
Yann Martel
Mario Vargas Llosa
Sofi Oksanen
Urvashi Butalia
Chigozie Obioma
DBC Pierre
Noo Saro-Wiwa
Isabel Allende
Inua Ellams
Ocean Vuong
Rafeef Ziadah
Elena Poniatowska
John Raulston Saul
Viet Thanh Nguyen

PEN International calls upon the international community, including UN member states and regional and multilateral institutions to:

1. Recognise the specific protection challenges and persecution facing writers and journalists which mean they may need to go into exile or claim asylum

2. Facilitate the timely and appropriate refugee status determination of journalists and writers and prioritise appropriate journalists and writers (e.g. with major health or trauma needs) for resettlement in third countries as particularly vulnerable refugees

3. Create more complementary pathways to resettlement in order to address the need for protection of writers which is not being met by existing mechanisms. The International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN) and other similar temporary relocation programmes provide good models, but more financial support and cooperation is needed

4. Ensure greater access to legal routes to travel such as humanitarian visas for writers, journalists and human rights defenders, and also access to freedom of movement for artists and cultural activists

5. Strongly condemn xenophobia against refugees and migrants – particularly when expressed by government leaders and officials – and support a global campaign to counter it

6. Protect the human rights of all refugees and migrants, regardless of status – be they considered “regular” or “irregular” migrants

7. Pay particular attention to safeguarding the rights of women and girls, protecting them from all forms of violence and exploitation, and promoting their full, equal and meaningful participation in decision-making on refugee and migrant issues

8. Ensure that all refugee and migrant children are receiving education within a few months of arrival, to ensure their rights to free expression

9. Strengthen the opportunities for migrants to make positive contributions to economic and social development in their countries of resettlement

10. Fulfil the cultural rights of displaced writers and communities by ensuring access to local culture, supporting their cultural practices and freedom of expression, and enabling cultural expression as a means to produce intercultural dialogue and exchange