



RESOLUTION ON MIGRATION AND DISPLACED WRITERS

Proposed by the Writers for Peace Committee and seconded by the French PEN Club, PEN Finland, Slovenian PEN, French PEN, Independent Chinese PEN Center, PEN Mali, PEN Germany and Wales PEN Cymru

The Assembly of Delegates of PEN International, meeting at its 85th annual Congress in Manila, Philippines, 29 September to 4 October 2019

Migration and the seeking of asylum due to forced displacement presents one of the greatest moral, political and practical challenges of our era. It is also an issue too often exploited for political ends by xenophobic public figures and political parties across the globe.

As a global organization of writers, PEN International is deeply concerned by the plight of refugees and asylum seekers generally, and of displaced writers particularly. Displaced persons often face great hardships in their countries of resettlement; these range from the practical challenges of incorporating oneself into - and making a full contribution to - the host culture, to hatred and violence fueled by xenophobia. In addition to upholding the right to freedom of expression, the PEN Charter commits us to promoting good understanding and mutual respect between nations and people. PEN International is steadfast in its determination to combat racism and xenophobia.

One in every 113 people globally is now either an asylum-seeker, internally displaced or a refugee¹. Among these individuals are many writers and journalists. In France, the Guinean writer Adama Diané² - thanks to the support of the French PEN Club - was able to obtain asylum. Other writers haven't been so lucky: Iranian-Kurdish journalist Behrouz Boochani³ tried to reach Australia but has been trapped in a detention center on Manus Island since 2013.

Writers, journalists, and translators flee their homes because they are often find themselves 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 PEN members in exile, and the writers we support through our protection work, have fled their homes due to such persecution; others have migrated as part of larger groups displaced by conflict, war, armed violence, poverty or sudden onset hazards or life-endangering situations caused by climate change. Displaced writers often live in fear of suspicion and violence, and face huge obstacles in publishing in different and often hostile linguistic markets.

¹ <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/press/2016/6/5763ace54/1-human-113-affected-forced-displacement-hits-record-high.html>

² <https://www.actualitte.com/article/monde-edition/adama-diane-auteur-guineen-menace-de-renvoi-immediat/88897>

³ <https://pen-international.org/news/papua-new-guinea-australia-take-action-for-journalist-behrouz-boochani>

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 translation 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.

Recognising that these needs are not always adequately met, in 2017, PEN International launched Make Space, its global Make Space campaign focused on promoting and protecting the rights and dignity of displaced writers⁴.

The Assembly of Delegates of PEN International calls on the international community, including UN member states and regional and multilateral institutions to:

- Recognise the specific protection challenges and persecution facing writers and journalists which mean they may need to go into exile or claim asylum;
- 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;
- Create more complementary pathways to resettlement in order to address the need for protection of writers which is not being met by existing mechanisms;
- Protect the human rights of all refugees and migrants, regardless of status;
- strongly condemn xenophobia against refugees and migrants – particularly when expressed by government leaders and officials;
- Ensure that all refugee and migrant children are receiving education within a few months of arrival, to ensure their rights to free expression;
- Fulfil the cultural rights of displaced writers and communities by ensuring access to local culture, providing translation services, supporting their cultural practices and freedom of expression, and enabling cultural expression as a means to produce intercultural dialogue and exchange;
- Strengthen the opportunities for migrants to make positive contributions to economic and social development in their countries of settlement.

⁴ <https://pen-international.org/supporting-writers-in-exile/make-space-campaign/the-make-space-statement>