‘Digital surveillance has become the partner in crime for states in their war on freedom of expression’ said Marian Botsford Fraser, Chair of the Writers in Prison Committee
Introduction

The 15 November 2013 marked the 32nd Day of the Imprisoned Writer, an annual fixture on the international freedom of expression calendar intended to recognize and support writers who resist repression of the fundamental human right to freedom of expression and who stand up to attacks made against their right to impart information.

Every year PEN International selects five writers from around the world that represent the type of threats and attacks faced by our colleagues as emblematic cases. This year, in continuation of our on-going work on digital freedom, PEN International selected cases of writers that are suffering violations of their right to freedom of expression for using digital media.

This year’s focus cases were: Dina Meza (Honduras), Fazil Say (Turkey), Kunchock Tsephel Gopey Tsang (Tibet), Zahra Rahnavard (Iran), and Rodney Sieh (Liberia)*.

PEN Centres from across the globe came together to express their solidarity with their fellow writers organising a diverse array of activities and events. Among them were poetry readings, live painting sessions, awards ceremonies, campaign videos, to name but a few. Centres not only highlighted the cases of our five emblematic cases, but also those of other writers who have been a focus of their own campaigning calendar some of whom may be seen on the following page.

While we regret that we could not include all PEN Centre activities in this report, we hope that the events included will provide inspiration for future PEN International campaign activities as we continue the fight for freedom of expression in 2014.

*On 8 November 2013, PEN International was delighted to hear that Rodney Sieh was released from Monrovia Central Prison. We therefore asked Centres not to highlight his case, but instead appeal to the president to repeal criminal defamation legislation in the country.
American PEN: As part of their on-going digital freedom research, American PEN Center published infographics on the cases of FrontPage Africa editor Rodney Sieh, Tibetan internet writer Kunchock Tsephel Gopey Tsang, Turkish writer, composer and musician Fazil Say, Qatari poet Mohamed al-Ajami and Vietnamese blogger Ta Phong Tan.

Bangladesh PEN: Organised a poetry reading at the National Press Club in Dhaka, in which more than 30 poets took part.

PEN Canada: PEN Canada used the Day of the Imprisoned Writer to highlight the cases of Honduran human rights defender Dina Meza, Uyghur writer Nurmuhemmet Yasin and Ethiopian poet Eskinder Nega in a multi-platform campaign which included a live painting session, petition signing, a social media campaign, and more. Artists Peru Dyer, Adrian Hayles, and Gilda Monreal were invited to create a mural in a live painting session in honour of persecuted writers Nurmuhemmet Yasin, Eskinder Nega, and Dina Meza.

The Centre collected more than 150 signatures for petitions calling for the release of Yasin and Nega, and in Dina Meza’s case, an appeal for the investigation of crimes against journalists and the adequate resources to protect them. The petitions were then sent to the appropriate embassies and ministers.

The event served as the perfect opportunity to engage with students of Ryerson University.

PEN Català: Marked the day with a range of events across Barcelona, Lleida and the Balearic Islands including the “Break down the bars” recital of texts written from prison hosted in a number of locations. At a press conference PEN Català announced the
winner of the fourth International Free Voice Prize: Easterine Kire. Poetry readings featuring Kire’s works were hosted, along with round table discussions on freedom of expression.

The opening of the Deletrix exhibition – a collaborative art project between Joan Fontcuberta and PEN Català – was held in Barcelona. The exhibit presents images of censored texts by different authors from different periods collected by Fontcuberta, award-winning photographer, from a variety of libraries and archives in Europe and North America alongside an art book which combines works taken from the exhibition with texts by writers, including PEN International President John Ralston Saul, Herta Müller, Salman Rushdie, Chenjerai Hove, Emmanuel Pierrat, Carme Arenas President of PEN Català, and Manuel Guerrero in which they reflect on the graphic testimonies to the intolerance of freedom of expression.

Croatian PEN: Released a poster to be displayed in Zagreb libraries and bookshops, which highlighted Kunchok Tsephel Gopey Tsang, Chinese journalist, writer and poet Shi Tao’s release and the case of Nicaraguan journalist Ismael López Ocampo.

Danish PEN: Used the Copenhagen Book Fair (8-10 November) to highlight the situation of each of our five emblematic cases.

English PEN: Published a crowd-sourced translation of *Poème Carcéral : Poésie du pénitencier de Kondengui*, a powerful collection of poems by Cameroonian writer and activist Enoh Meyomesse. To download a copy, available in e-book or pdf format, click [here](mailto:).
PEN Esperanto: Will host a conversation with Burmese writer and one of the co-founders of Myanmar PEN Dr Ma Thida on 15 December 2013. The event, chaired by Chiara Macconi, will provide an opportunity for PEN members to learn more about the current situation of freedom of expression in Myanmar.

Finnish PEN: Vice President Marianne Bargum was interviewed on morning television about both Finnish PEN and PEN International’s work, including the Day of the Imprisoned Writer. The Centre published links to the interviews and our materials on their website and Facebook account.

Flanders PEN: Produced a short film with 30 of their members each reading a line in Dutch (with English subtitles) of ‘You wait for me with the Dust’ by Liu Xiaobo. The video was picked up by the Flemish press and other media on the Day of the Imprisoned Writer, with Centre members also sharing it via social media.

In tandem with the release of the video, Flanders PEN also published a box with boxed-set of four writers censored in their own country, available for sale online.

German PEN: Every year German PEN marks the eve of the Day of the Imprisoned Writer with the award ceremony for its Hermann-Kesten Prize in Darmstadt. This year’s prize was awarded to Index on Censorship. On 15 November, the Centre held an event in Leipzig where German PEN President Josef Haslinger talked to representatives of Index and Najet Aduan, a current beneficiary of one of German PEN’s Writers-in-Exile
scholarships, on freedom of expression and imprisoned writers. The conversations was recorded by public broadcaster Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk and broadcast on 30 November. Additionally, German PEN co-operated with a Giessen student initiative Gefangenes Wort (Captured Word) to hold its annual book jumble sale. The students raised awareness of writers currently in prison while selling 3,800 books and raising over €4,300. The money will go to Vietnam to support Nguyen Xuan Nghia and Le Quoc Quan.

Josef Haslinger was interviewed by the German Press Agency (DPA) while Sascha Feuchert gave interviews to various radio stations and was interviewed by HNA a large newspaper. German TV station ZDF also showed a short film about Najet Adouani.

German Speaking Abroad: Italian resident, Stefanie Golisch, published a poetry book online in memory of Albanian writer Musine Kokalari (1917-1983). In a blog post Golisch provided an account of Kokalari – the first female writer in Albania, imprisoned after she wrote a letter to the Allied Forces in which she called for free elections and freedom of expression – and dedicated a poem to her.

In the United States, the Citizens of the World Club along with the Global Studies Initiative at North Carolina Central University in Durham held an awareness event, which included poetry readings, short presentations and a reception entitled “Commemorating the Imprisoned Writer: A Poetry Reading and Discussion around the Globe”. The event was dedicated to Kunchok Tsephel Gopey Tsang and Dina Meza. At the reading original poetry in Spanish was recited by Dr Horacio Xaubet, while the English translation was read by German Speaking Abroad member Dr Claudia Becker. This reading was followed by the recitation of original poetry in German by Dr Claudia Becker with an English translation ready by Dr Xaubet. The poetry readings were followed by presentations on free speech and the act of writing. Two candles were lit at a reception dedicated to Gopey Tsang and Meza. The event was broadcast to Uruguay via Skype.
Independent Chinese PEN Centre (ICPC): Highlighted the cases of imprisoned writers Tan Zuoren and Nguyen Xuan Nghia by awarding them the 2013 Liu Xiaobo Courage to Write Award for their “long-term tenacity and courage in writing despite the threat of imprisonment”. Previous winners were Yang Tongyan, Zhang Lin, Lü Gengsong, Du Daobin, Zu Zerong, Liu Xianbin, Zarganar, Hada, Qin Yongmin, Chen Wei, Dolma Kyab and Wu Yilong.

In a press release, ICPC showed solidarity with the six Centre members still imprisoned, along with 24 of ICPC’s honorary members. On the Day of the Imprisoned Writer, ICPC announced the names of four writers newly taken up as honorary members by the Centre: Liu Benqi, Xu ZhiYong, Liu Hu and Yang Maodong.

Japan PEN: Celebrated the 25th anniversary of Japan PEN’s WiPC with an event which shone a light on its achievements to date. Hori Takeaki was a key notes speaker.

Kurdish PEN: In conjunction with Turkish PEN hosted an all-day event on 23rd November, which included a seminar on freedom of speech, speeches from former imprisoned writers, and an evening with classic singers singing Kurdish songs. Kurdish PEN also ran a letter-writing campaign and visited writers in prisons in Diyarbakir.

Macedonian PEN: In conjunction with the PEN Diversity Project organised a public speaking competition in which seven young intellectuals spoke on the topic of ‘Digital Freedom and the Writer’. The event coincided with other literary events, including poetry readings by Macedonian poets. The speeches may be found here.
PEN Mexico: Held their award ceremony on 21 November 2013 at the San Carlos National Museum where they presented the Journalistic Excellence Award, Editorial Excellence Award, Civic Participation Award, and the Award for Commitment to the Word to writers, journalists and human rights defenders.

PEN Mexico, San Miguel de Allende PEN and Guadalajara PEN: Presented PEN International’s 2012 *Write Against Impunity* anthology – a literary protest against the culture of impunity that prevails across Latin America – at an event in Guadalajara on 6 December 2013.

PEN The Netherlands: *NRC Handelsblad*, one of the leading national newspapers in the Netherlands, published an article, written by Manon Uphoff and René Appel, Secretary and President of PEN The Netherlands respectively, on imprisoned writers and the activities of PEN, especially the Writers in Prison Committee.

New Zealand PEN: Held their annual ‘Courage Day’ event at the Thistle Inn in Wellington. The event saw John Morgan, human rights spokesperson for the United Nations Association of New Zealand, Jan Logie MP, human rights spokesperson for the Green Party, and Nicky Hagar, investigative journalist speak to those gathered about freedom of expression. The event was opened with the setting out of the Empty Chair and Dr Nelson Wattie, New Zealand Society of Authors PEN representative reading a letter from the head of Turkish PEN, Tarik Günersel. John Morgan utilised the works of Shakespeare, Seamus Heaney and Czeslaw Milosz to highlight the importance of literature in keeping open the door to conversation, highlighting the importance of honesty in literature. Jan Logie talked on her recent experiences in Sri Lanka remarking that it gave her a new found sense of privilege at the freedom of expression that New Zealanders enjoy, a point that was shared by Nicky Hagar. Hagar also spoke of the developing role of the digital media in freedom of
expression and the issues and opportunities they present. Full details of the event may be found in Wellington Branch member Pippa Werry’s blog post.

Palestinian PEN: Used the day, which coincides with a national holiday, to discuss writers currently held in Israeli jails. The Centre discussed two works: *Nafhah Prison Speaks* by Jibril Rjoub (Ramallah, Dar Al-Shuruq, 2014) and *In the Beginning You Palestine; Episodes of the Siege* (Ramallah, Dar al-Shuruq, 2014). The works were introduced by Dr Hasan Abdallah and short-story writer Hakam Balaawi respectively, followed by critical analysis of the works led by Dr.Nariman al-far and Dr. Othman, and followed by open discussion. The meeting was devoted to the creativity of the imprisoned writers, to the people and to the intellectuals in Palestine and the world. Palestinian PEN is collecting works by Palestinian writers in prison to be published in an anthology entitled *PEN will not surrender*, which they hope to publish in 2015. The meeting was ended by the reading of Palestinian PEN’s statement expressing concern for the situation of freedom of expression in Palestine.

Paraguayan PEN: Showed solidarity with their colleague, writer and member of Paraguayan PEN, Nelson Aguilera who was sentenced to 30 months in prison for supposed plagiarism in his latest novel *Kurumbita: La patriota* on 4 November 2013. On 12 November 2013, more than 100 writers and exponents of literature demonstrated outside the court in Asunción to protest his sentence.

Quebec PEN: along with Amnesty International and the International Union of Quebec Writers (UNEQ) united their voices to denounce human rights abuses and to commemorate the Day of the Imprisoned Writer at the Montreal Book Fair (20-25 November 2013) with
the 14th annual “Livres comme l’air” campaign. The campaign, born in 2000 has contributed to the release of more than 60 writers worldwide. This year, 10 writers were paired with a further 10 writers imprisoned across the globe: Marie-Célie Agnant with Dieudonné Enoh Meyomesse (Cameroon); Germaine Beaulieu with Li Bifeng (China); Jean-Paul Daoust with Jabeur Mejri (Tunisia); Jean-Pierre Davidts with Raif Badawi (Saudi Arabia); Gaétane Dufour with Ángel Sientiesteban-Prats (Cuba); Karoline Georges with Dolma Kyab (Tibet); Pierre Ouellet with Akram Aylisli (Azerbaijan); André Roy with Somyot Prueksakasemsuk (Thailand); Neil Smith with Vo minh Tri and Tran Vu Anh Binh (Vietnam); and Kim Thuy with Mohamed al-Ajami (Qatar). The writers dedicated one of their works to their imprisoned colleague at an event on 22 November 2013. Over the course of the book fair Quebec PEN encouraged visitors to sign petitions calling for the release of writers unjustly persecuted for their writings.

Slovene PEN: Sent an open letter to governments – also published on their website – on behalf of Slovene PEN and the Writers for Peace Committee calling on governments to ensure the fundamental right to freedom of expression and for the release of writers and poets who have been imprisoned for the peaceful exercise of this right. On 16 November an interview between Writers in Prison Committee Chair, Marian Botsford Fraser, was and Gregor Podlogar, Slovene PEN member, was broadcast on Slovene national radio station Radio Slovenija.

South African PEN: In conjunction with Kalk Bay Books put on an evening of rousing music, poetry and free speech event in Cape Town, to highlight PEN’s five cases on 15 November

PEN Suisse Romand: Marked the Day of the Imprisoned Writer and the Day to End Impunity with a special press campaign. Members sent out their appeal for solidarity – in the form of a press release – through the Geneva Press Club, reaching out to international radio broadcasting services including Deutsche Welle, NHK, Radio Australia, Radio Praha, RFI, VOA, and the BBC. Their release was published in three Swiss daily newspapers: Tribune de Genève, le Temps, and le Courrier, as well as a dedicated webpage and PEN Suisse Romand’s bulletin. The focus cases for PEN Suisse Romand were Kunchok Tsephel Gopey Tsang, Dina Meza, Mohamed al-Ajami, Turkish writer Ayse Berktay, Vietnamese poet and anti-corruption activist Nguyên Huu Câu and Kazakh poet Aaron Atabek.

Swiss Italian and Reto-Romansh: In association with Swiss German & Suisse Romand PEN Centres hosted two days of events on 18 and 18 November in high schools in Lugano and Mendrisio respectively, in which at least 200 people attended. The event “Writers and Information: Between Freedom and Rights in Hostage” included a film screening of ‘The Girls of Kabul’ as well as discussions with special guests: Alessandro Grandi, freelance war correspondent; Domenico Quirico, journalist with La Stampa, recently held hostage in Syria; Omar Sayal, persecuted Afghan journalists and writer; and Mario Carotenuto, Head of Humanitarian Missions of the Italian Emergency Corps of the Order of Malta.

Swiss German PEN: Dedicated the day to the Kurdish language and invited Kurdish writers Irfan Babaoglu and Sehmus Sefer (President of Kurdish PEN) to Zurich and Basle. At events attended by 60 and 40 people respectively, Babaoglu and Sefer were interviewed by Yusuf Yesilöz, author and filmmaker, about their own situations, state of freedom of expression
in Turkey, and more specifically linguistic rights issues in relation to the Kurdish language in Turkey. Both Babaoglu and Sefer have faced persecution for their work. Their works were also read out.

**Tibetan Writers Abroad PEN:** Marked the day by organising a public debate in Dharamsala. The event, attended by at least 40 people, included four guest speakers: Palden Gyatso (ex-political prisoner.) Tsering Tsomo (Executive Director for the Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy) Buddha Kyab (Writer and brother of Kunchok Tsephel who is in prison in Tibet at the moment.) Lobsang Chokta (Vice president of Tibetan Writers Abroad P.E.N.).

**Turkish PEN:** Called for the release of the 73 recorded PEN main cases in Turkey at a meeting held on 15 November in collaboration with the Turkish Publishers Association and the Writers’ Union of Turkey. Turkish PEN Chairment Tarik Günersel emphasised that Turkey is at a critical phase and that, despite a last year’s PEN delegation meeting with President Abdullah Gül and European Union Minister Egemen Bağış in Ankara, the number of writers in prison has increase from 60 to 73. The event was covered in the national press including the *Hurriyet Daily News*. In the run up to the day, Turkish PEN also called for messages of solidarity to be sent by PEN Centres for use in their campaigning on the day and to send out to the Turkish media.