

PEN CANADA  
FOR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

# bulletin

By Isobel Harry



# exile

AARON BERTHANE IS PEN CANADA LECTURER IN RESIDENCE AT GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE IN TORONTO. SEE PAGE 5.

Writers championed by PEN Canada face many kinds of risks. They are caught in wars, imprisoned, intimidated by governments or gangs, working in exile or living as refugees. Sadly, these risks do not end when the writers escape their homelands, leave refugee centres or even when they are fortunate enough to arrive in Canada. The uprooting often jeopardizes their careers, written works and family life. In the mid-1990s, PEN Canada realized that welcoming persecuted writers to Canada was only a first step, and that there was a need to offer tangible aid to smooth resettlement. The organization felt morally bound to help, but there were no resources then in place to do it. PEN Canada and Massey College formalized the first relationship to help an exiled writer in 1994, offering a residency to a Bosnian writer for a year, complete with stipend, accommodation and meals. Since then, Massey College's support of refugee writers has grown to accommodate journalists and scholars who find themselves at risk in their countries of origin.

Based on the Massey model, the Writers in Exile Network was developed by PEN Canada's Writers in Exile Committee, led by Haroon Siddiqui, specifically to expand the range and location of placements in academic institutions. Each institution's program is a unique creation, suited to its own needs, opportunities and capacities. The

placements take the form of teaching or writing residencies, translation and publication projects, cultural and community outreach programs, creative writing seminars, screenwriting workshops, reading and lecture series, student bursaries and scholarships, and journalism or publishing internships. The writers considered for placements are represented in an on-line catalogue on PEN Canada's Web site.

With generous support in the form of a three-year grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, PEN Canada has also developed the Readers & Writers program, offering readers in Ontario communities a literary discovery tour, featuring local, established and exiled writers. At the heart of this program is an outreach effort to locate exiled writers in Canada not yet in contact with PEN Canada and to raise awareness among the general public. It has visited nine Ontario communities since its inception in 2003, and has more visits planned for this year. The coordinator of the program is Philip Adams, whose background in theatre production enables him to create unique showcases for the writers.

As PEN Canada developed these initiatives, there was great interest from other PEN Centres faced with their own challenges with refugee writers, and it has been closely involved in the ongoing development of the International PEN Writers in Exile Network, currently serving as committee Chair. The Network comprises approximately 16

*see exile page 5*

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Design Soapbox Design Communications Inc.

PEN Canada is committed to defending freedom of opinion and the peaceable expression of such opinion, as guaranteed by Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It campaigns on behalf of writers around the world persecuted for the expression of their thoughts. In Canada, it supports the right to freedom of expression as enshrined in Section 2 (b) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. PEN Canada is a centre of International PEN, the world wide writers' association founded in England in 1921.

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# rarebooks rarepeople

By Camilla Gibb



On January 28th, PEN Canada held a very special event to thank new and existing patrons in the stunning atrium of University of Toronto's Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library.

Held in conjunction with the library's most recent exhibit: *Nihil Obstat: An Exhibition of Banned, Censored & Challenged Books in the West from 1491-2000*, the reception was a opportunity to connect PEN Canada's work with the long and tangible history of censorship demonstrated by the exhibition. The books on display included several by prominent Canadian writers, such as *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood, *Such is my Beloved* by Morley Callaghan and *Lives of Girls and Women* by Alice Munro.

It was a privilege to have Alice Munro join us to read from that book, as one of the distinguished roster of writers and supporters who served as PEN Canada ambassadors that evening: Aaron Berhane, June Callwood, Wayson Choy, Austin Clarke, David Cronenberg, Graeme Gibson, Thomas King, Yann Martel, Anne Michaels, Rohinton Mistry, John Polanyi, Nino Ricci, Leon Rooke, Susan Swan, Jane Urquhart, M.G. Vassanji and Eleanor Wachtel.

Munro's reading was framed by a series of brief remarks by Honorary Event Chair Margaret Atwood, Interim University of Toronto President Frank Iacobucci, Honorary Patron John Ralston Saul, Bill Graham, former minister of Foreign Affairs and now Minister of Defence, and Stella Lee, wife of Honorary Member Jiang Weiping, and Fisher Library Director Richard Landon. Each addressed different

aspects of PEN Canada's work, offering a powerful overall picture of the breadth of our concerns at home and abroad and stressing the importance of continued vigilance in the struggle to defend freedom of expression.

Iacobucci, a former Supreme Court Justice, quoted John Milton, saying that individuals must have "the liberty to know, to utter and to argue freely according to conscience," adding that we err when we taken such freedoms lightly.

"Freedom of expression is not only at the heart of the academic enterprise, it is at the core of what it means to be an enlightened democracy," he said.

As a fundraiser, the event proved a tremendous success, raising \$84,000 in corporate sponsorship, and \$18,000 in new patron donations. In-kind donations and reduced rates dramatically reduced our expenditures resulting in a net profit of over \$60,000.

We are indebted to everyone who made this a remarkable night of rare books and rare people. Our thanks to The Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library staff, in particular Pearce Carefoote, the curator of the exhibition, and Anne Dondertman, Assistant Director.

A great big thank you to all the volunteers who helped to make the event so successful — we couldn't have done it without you!

# rarebooks rarepeople

## PEN in 3 Minutes

by Margaret Atwood

WE'RE HERE THIS EVENING TO CELEBRATE AN EXTRAORDINARY INSTITUTION WITH A LONG AND HONOURABLE HISTORY, WHICH YOU'LL BE HAPPY TO HEAR I WON'T GO INTO NOW. INSTEAD I'D LIKE TO SAY THREE THINGS VERY BRIEFLY.

One: No free speech organization is without its nervous-making cases. It's usually these items we end up having to defend – since we're defending a principle, not an individual book or author. So not everything PEN finds itself supporting will make you thrill with joy. But if the cringe-making cases are lost, so may be much else.

Two: PEN Canada has a high international profile right now, not only because of the continuing excellent work of its very active Writers in Prison Committee, but also for its Writers in Exile program. In short, we get writers out, and then we help them rebuild. In this time of huge generosity towards the many whose lives have been devastated by the tsunami, let's not forget the others whose lives have also been devastated, through political persecution. The pressures against free speech are heating up, even within democratic societies themselves. No tyrant ever loved a truth-teller. Short version: we do good and necessary work.

Three: PEN is and always has been a lean, clean operation. It runs mostly on volunteer work. Its members give generously of their time, their energy, their brainpower and their willpower. We do need some money, because you can lick the stamps for nothing but you have to buy them first. PEN spends the money entrusted to it wisely and in a commendably miserly way.

Those are my three things. The fourth: support PEN for the same reason you give blood – because you may need it sooner than you think.



1. HONORARY EVENT CHAIR  
MARGARET ATWOOD  
PHOTO CREDIT: MICHAEL WATIER
2. THE HONOURABLE BILL GRAHAM,  
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HIS EXCELLENCY, JOHN RALSTON SAUL  
WITH SPECIAL GUEST ALICE MUNRO.  
PHOTO CREDIT: MCPL CINDY MOLYNEAUX

member centres who work with exiles in the following three areas: Cities of Asylum; university placements, writer residencies, lectures and events; and retreats.

PEN Canada has now drafted the first Writers in Exile Network Handbook, to be presented at the next International PEN Congress in Slovenia.

In 2004, PEN Canada was chosen for funding to hold an international conference in Ottawa on writers in exile. Hosted by the Department of Foreign Affairs and under the patronage of His Excellency John Ralston Saul, the conference brought together representatives from PEN centres in Norway, Germany, USA and Spain to speak of their programs for exiled writers to ninety delegates from Canadian academic institutions, libraries and arts councils. Many of these pledged to support the Network. First to respond, even before the conference in fact, was the Banff Centre with an offer to host a writer in the Cultural Journalism or Leighton Studios programs.

Since then, we have received funds from Maytree Foundation and IDRC to follow up on the conference commitments and have hired David Cozac, who works half-time on our programs, also to work half-time on building the Network. His French, Spanish and English skills are a great asset to this work.

George Brown College, York University and Acadia University soon came with offers to host an exiled writer. We are now following up with the University of Calgary,

Owen Sound Library, Laurentian University, Sheridan College and the University of Windsor, as well as several other institutions. Laval University is working with Quebec PEN to accommodate a writer in 2006.

Now, Benjamín Santamaría Ochoa of Mexico is a writer in residence at Acadia University in Wolfville, N.S.; Eritrean journalist Aaron Berhane is a lecturer in residence at George Brown College; Reza Baraheni is a writer in residence at York University as well as a Scholar at Risk at the University of Toronto; Ethiopian writer and Honorary Member Tesfaye Kumsa, released from prison with PEN's efforts, is taking a Master of Arts in Communications at York University (with waived tuition fee); Goran Simic, who arrived from Bosnia with PEN's assistance in 1996, has completed a Fleck writing fellowship at the Banff Centre; Andrea Hila, Albanian writer, has been accepted into Banff's translation program this summer, where he will work with a translator for two weeks; and George Seremba, a playwright who fled Uganda now working on his PhD. at Dublin University, will come to Massey College as a Scholar at Risk next fall.

We continue to help writers who are persecuted abroad, and to identify more writers in exile here in Canada through outreach to many different communities and organizations. We research outlets for work by exiled writers and look for their pieces in periodicals and reviews such as the *Canadian Literary Review*. Visit [www.pencanada.ca](http://www.pencanada.ca) for updates.

## Profile: Aaron Berhane

By Anna Luengo

When I called Aaron Berhane early one morning in 2003 to offer him the position of Journalist at Risk at Massey College, I first asked him if he was properly awake. I was concerned that he might think he was dreaming when I told him what we were offering: an eight-month fellowship with a stipend, board and lodging, freedom to audit as many courses as he liked, and three trips. Happily, he accepted.

Berhane is an Eritrean journalist who was forced to flee his country, leaving his family and the newspaper he founded, when government agents started attacking him and his colleagues. He was able to escape and eventually made his way to Canada. He is currently PEN Lecturer in Residence at George Brown College in Toronto. Recently we had a chance to chat about both the Fellowship and life at George Brown.

"The fellowship," he said, "serves the journalist as a compass. It gives you time to sort out things, to do your own research, to learn about Canadian media and culture from the Canadian journalists and the guests who are invited to talk. I have created good connections with important people. As a result I was able to assess if it would be possible to work in my profession. I was able to research how I could start my own newspaper, and finally I did and I finished my screen-

play, which is waiting for a producer. This program led me to the life that I want to pursue."

"Being a *Writer in Residence* at George Brown College is an honour. You realize that there are people who respect your values and give credit to the suffering you've gone through because of your professional work. You get a chance to influence the students by sharing your experience so that they can be keen to check how the media work. By presenting first hand information about your country and its neighbours you contribute to broadening their knowledge of the region. For me it also opens another opportunity: the time that I get to do my own writing! The program at George Brown is essential; it brings your life from the corner to the centre due to the continuous interaction you have with students and professors and it gives you personal satisfaction for contributing something to the college."

Berhane continues his Residency until June, 2005.

*Anna Luengo is Administrator at Massey College and looks after the Journalism, Scholar at Risk and Writer in Exile Programs.*

# POETRY WITH A PULSE

## FREEDOM TO READ WEEK

by Philip Adams



AN EVENING OF WONDROUS STRANGE POETRY HOSTED BY MOSES ZNAIMER WITH PLAYWRIGHT AND EXILED ERITREAN JOURNALIST AARON BERHANE, HIP-HOP ARTIST BELLADONNA WITH HER BAND, AUTHOR MUNIR PERVAIZ OF PEN CANADA'S WRITERS IN EXILE COMMITTEE, CHINESE-CANADIAN DISSIDENT POET AND JOURNALIST SHENG XUE WITH RICHARD LEE, AND POET KEN BABSTOCK (CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER LEFT)

PHOTOGRAPHY DONA ACHESON  
TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY

IN SOME COUNTRIES WHEN A POET STANDS UP TO SPEAK, THE AUTHORITIES REACH FOR THEIR RIFLES. HERE IN CANADA WE ARE MORE FORTUNATE – PEOPLE LAUGH, THEY CRY, THEY REACH FOR A DRINK, AND THEN THEY RETURN TO THEIR WARM, COMFORTABLE HOUSES. WE'RE LUCKY.

Such was the case with this year's Freedom to Read Week event. Poetry with a Pulse set out to do something not often seen on the PEN stages. We brought in a hip-hop band, staged a new play by an exiled writer, performed Mandarin poems with simultaneous and interweaving translation (you had to be there...) as well as traditional readings in which the sounds of the poets' words from the poets' mouths filled the hall.

We wanted to attract young people to this event. We wanted to show them that poetry is not a bad word; that it is such a powerful tool that some of the people in the room had been thrown in jail for their poems. It takes many forms: a rap song is a poem with music, and people cannot avoid the message of anger and frustration while they are tapping their toes to the beat. That is the power that a

poet has. That is why PEN Canada must continue to exist. That is why it is most unfortunate that we must continue our vigilance and challenge those who would stifle our right to express ourselves freely.

Even though many writers forget to consult a small device called a watch when they read in public, each was free to speak in a way they chose. No one said, "You can't say that."

The place was packed. Young people showed up. New faces appeared and participated. People lingered and chatted. Security guards kicked us out. And the wet winter snow reminded us that this was Canada and that, in this country, we are able to assemble, speak loudly about our freedoms, exhort people to keep an eye on these things and feel warmed by the fine words of some of our finest writers.

# NEW HONORARY MEMBERS

## HADA, INNER MONGOLIAN AUTONOMOUS REGION, CHINA

The author and democracy activist was arrested in December 1995, following his participation in several pro-democracy demonstrations. On December 6, 1996, after a year of detention without trial, Hada was tried for “conspiring to overthrow the government” and “espionage”, and was sentenced to 15 years’ imprisonment. Subsequent appeals against the sentences were rejected. Hada is due for release in 2010. Hada is thought to be imprisoned in the 4th Prison of Inner Mongolia, in the city of Chi Feng (Ulaan-Hada).

## LI ZHI, CHINA

The Internet writer and financial official in the Dazhou municipal government, Sichuan Province, was arrested on August 8, 2003, by Sichuan Province State Security Police after posting an essay on an overseas Web site that accused Sichuan officials of corruption. Li was officially charged on September 3 with “conspiracy to subvert state power” for having contact with foreign-based dissidents. The Dazhou Intermediate People’s Court sentenced Li, aged 33, to eight years in prison on December 11.

## AMIR ABBAS FAKHRAVAR, IRAN

Fakhravar is a writer, journalist and medical student. He was arrested on November 10, 2002. Fakhravar was sentenced by Bench 26 of the Revolutionary Court to eight years in prison for criticizing the supreme leadership of Iran in his book *Inja Chah Nist* (*This Place is Not a Ditch*), short listed for the 2001/2 Paulo Coelho Literary Prize. Fakhravar is reportedly held among common prisoners. He is said to have been repeatedly attacked in staged assaults by fellow inmates. In January 2004, Fakhravar was taken from Qasr prison to a military detention centre for interrogation about alleged links with an opposition political organization called Jonbesh-e Azadi-ye Iraniyan. He was held in solitary confinement and subjected to a technique of sensory deprivation is called “white torture”.

## PAUL KAMARA, SIERRA LEONE

The founding editor and publisher of the daily *For Di People* was arrested on October 3, 2003, the same day the newspaper had printed articles about corrupt activities that linked the current president of Sierra Leone. On October 5, Kamara was found guilty of charges of seditious libel. The journalist was sentenced to two 24-month sentences, to run concurrently. Kamara began serving the sentence immediately at Pademba Road Prison, Freetown.

## MUHAMMED BEKZHON, UZBEKISTAN

Bekzhon was deported from Ukraine in March 1999 on accusation of involvement in a series of explosions in Tashkent. Several others were arrested in connection with these events, including writer Mamadali Makhmudov. It is thought that Bekzhon’s arrest is linked to his association with the exiled opposition leader Muhammed Salih (his brother) and that the charges are linked to his work on *Erk*, the opposition party’s newspaper, although it has been banned since 1994. Bekzhon was sentenced to 15 years in prison in March 1999. There are concerns that Bekzhon has been tortured while in prison.

## YUSIF RUZIMURADOV, UZBEKISTAN

The journalist and opposition politician was deported from Ukraine in March 1999 on accusation of involvement in a series of explosions in Tashkent. It is thought that Ruzimuradov’s arrest is linked to his association with Muhammed Salih and that the charges are linked to his work on *Erk*, where Ruzimuradov was editor-in-chief. Ruzimuradov was sentenced to eight years in prison in March 1999, on charges of attempting to “overturn the government by force”, “membership of an illegal organization” and “slander” of the Uzbek President. While exact details of his physical state are unknown, there are reports that Ruzimuradov’s health is deteriorating as a result of the appalling conditions at this prison camp.



## Thanks from an Honorary Member

FROM A LETTER OF THANKS BY HONORARY MEMBER  
HASSAN ESHKEVARI TO FORMER PEN CANADA  
PRESIDENT REZA BARAHENI, DATED MARCH 1, 2005,  
WRITTEN SHORTLY AFTER HIS RELEASE FROM PRISON:

“I particularly feel that it is my duty to thank some of the PEN sections of the International PEN that had chosen me as their honorary member. As far as I know, PEN Canada did more than any other literary and cultural organization, in all ways possible, to uphold my rights as a writer. When you were the president of PEN Canada, you did everything in your power to uphold my rights and liberties. I express my gratitude both to PEN Canada and to you. Please communicate my special thanks to all members of PEN Canada and its President. In the final days of my imprisonment, I received PEN Canada’s greetings for the arrival of the New Year (2005). I appreciate PEN Canada’s card.

“My final words: I have no doubt that the cultured people of Iran, and the intellectuals, the lovers of liberty and justice in this country, regardless of their ideologies, beliefs and ways of life, will continue their march toward freedom and will exert all their efforts in order to change the situation to achieve democracy and provide for human rights and justice.”

PHOTO: RUHOLLAH YOUSEFI  
TAKEN ON FEBRUARY 6, 2005, THE DAY OF ESHKEVARI’S RELEASE

(TRANSLATED FROM THE FARSI BY REZA BARAHENI)

## Writers in Exile Club

If you are a writer in exile, or know someone who is, you may be interested in the Exiles Club, founded in December 2003 by Saghi Gharaman, a poet and short-story writer who fled Iran. The group meets monthly to offer peer support, explore common concerns and share insights about the country they now call home. They also offer practical advice about professional development through feature speakers such as Lorraine Filyer of the Ontario Arts Council and Antonio D’Alfonso, Editor-in-Chief of Guernica Editions. They plan more sessions on publishing, translation and mentorship. Meetings are held on the last Saturday of each month and everyone is welcome. They are held at Romero House, 1558 Bloor St. W. in Toronto, from 7 to 10 p.m.

If you are outside of Toronto, write to:  
sghahraman@rogers.com.

# National Update

by Christopher Waddell

PEN Canada is pleased that a January settlement finally ended both the criminal and civil proceedings against author **Stephen Williams** that began almost two years ago in a series of police raids on his home.

Under the agreement, the Crown in Ontario dropped almost 100 charges filed against Williams in exchange for him pleading guilty to a single misdemeanor related to breaching a court order by briefly placing information on a web site.

However, this settlement will not erase the fact that Ontario chose to jail an author for something the state alleged he had written. Nor will it reduce the punishing impact, on him and his wife, writer Marsha Boulton, of the almost two years of harassment and financial hardship while trying to defend themselves.

The Williams case forms part of a growing and disturbing pattern of attempts by police and the courts in Canada to obtain confidential sources from journalists and writers whose work embarrasses or challenges authorities and to punish those who believe it is vital to protect their sources.

As these incidents take place, PEN Canada will continue to speak out in defence of freedom of expression and in support of the work of journalists and authors in Canada.

## Upcoming PEN Events

### Literary Faceoff – The Sequel

On Saturday, April 30, St. Michael's College Arena in Toronto will host a re-match of last year's very successful PEN Canada Great Literary Faceoff. With many of last year's writers and publishers returning, and a few new faces such as the *Globe and Mail's* Roy MacGregor and *Maclean's* magazine regular Charlie Gillis, the now-annual grudge match enjoys a new level of charm in the storied arena (only a minute's walk from the St. Clair West subway station at Bathurst) and a renewed push by the writers to atone for last year's 4-2 defeat. Adding CBC Radio Metro Morning sports reporter Kevin Sylvester in goal should help boost scores, and with tickets available in all Book City locations and an aggressive marketing campaign around downtown campuses, we'll look to more than double last year's attendance. Negotiations are well underway to secure a new celebrity host (and hopefully a celebrity referee), but we'll boast about that more when details are confirmed. Puck drops at 2pm.

### Annual General Meeting

PEN Canada 2004 Annual General Meeting

Tuesday, June 28, 2005

Massey College, 4 Devonshire Place (south off Bloor, east of St. George)

University of Toronto

5:00 p.m. AGM Business

Reception to follow

For more information please contact Caitlin Smith at (416) 703-8448, ext. 25  
csmith@pencanada.ca

### Banff Anthology of Exile Writing

**Maggie Helwig**, a PEN Canada director who sits on the Exile Committee, is the editor of *Speaking in Tongues: Writers in a New Land*, to be published by Banff Centre Press in April. Introduction is by John Ralston Saul and contributors are Zdenka Acin, Reza Baraheni, Andrea Hila, Martha Kumsa, Stella Lee, Faruk Myrtaj, Fereshteh Molavi, Benjamín Santamaría Ochoa, Senthilnathan Ratnasabapathy, George Seremba, Goran Simic and Mehri Yelfani. We plan to help launch this book at our AGM at Massey College on June 28, and to have copies available at future PEN events.

## FUNDRAISING AT PEN CANADA

If they think about it at all, most PEN Canada members think of fundraising at PEN as member renewals sent by mail to existing members and occasional special events. But fundraising at PEN is much more than that. In our efforts to establish a firm financial footing we are continually reaching out to individuals and companies that support our mission and are willing to back up their commitment with a financial contribution. Our recently established fundraising committee of the board is examining new ways to attract patron members (\$1000 or more per year) and Corporate Circle members (\$10,000 a year for three years). We also hope to expand our Book Royalties Circle, which now includes two titles from Eleanor Wachtel and one from Alberto Manguel, and other fundraising efforts across Canada.

In this new feature of Bulletin, we will profile PEN Canada donors, asking them to talk about why PEN Canada matters to them. For more information about any aspect of fundraising at PEN Canada, please contact Caitlin Smith at csmith@pencanada.ca

# CHANDARIA FAMILY

## COMMITTED TO FACING CHALLENGE ALONGSIDE PEN CANADA



SUNIR AND NAVIN CHANDARIA

*By Pike Wright with notes from Caitlin Smith*

"PEN is a well-recognized institution that supports the greatest and most special thrust of democracy – the freedom of expression," says Sunir Chandaria, Vice President of Conros Corporation, the newest member of PEN Canada's Corporate Circle. "Our family has come a long way since our roots in India and East Africa. We remember the pains that have been experienced under oppressive regimes and can relate to the challenges that PEN battles."

A member of PEN's Corporate Circle since December 2004, Conros Corporation is an important newcomer to the organization. Beyond the company's commitment as a corporate patron, Sunir is also a member of PEN Canada's fundraising committee, bringing an important business perspective to the team.

"We receive many requests to support a number of charitable organizations throughout Canada and the world. We must, therefore be selective about the causes we support," says Sunir. "PEN Canada has demonstrated its long-term vision, action, and support for freedom of expression and we believe this is a cause in need of our support."

The Chandaria family is no stranger to long-term vision. In 1975, Navin Chandaria and his wife Sarla immigrated to Canada to oversee the family's business in Canadian and

U.S. markets. Over the course of 25 years, Navin, CEO and President of Conros, has built up their artificial firelog production company from only 2% to more than 70% market share. Truly a family affair, Conros Corporation is led by Navin and his brothers with son Sunir playing a central role. Sunir is a graduate of Oxford University, where he studied economics and management.

Conros recently acquiring the LePage Tape and Glue Company, as well as operating in insurance and real estate markets. Counting their innovative technologies and pioneering spirit as integral to their success, the Chandaria family willingly embraces challenge and competition.

The Chandaria family's dedication to success is not limited to the business world. "Our family has built its success through honesty, integrity and hard work. It is our aim to instill these same core values in our next generation. The best and most resounding example that one can offer to young people is through our actions," explains Sunir. They demonstrate this commitment through their involvement in a number of charitable institutions, including the Stratford Shakespearean Festival, the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in the United Kingdom, and as a financial supporter of Scarborough Centenary Health Centre.

"We choose to help our local and

international communities to teach our children the honour and pleasure in giving, rather than receiving," explains Navin.

More recently, the Chandaria family was heavily involved in the South Asian Tsunami relief efforts. "Our involvement with disaster-relief helps us relate in some way to the pain of those who are suffering most, rather than those who are privileged enough to sit comfortably on their couches and watch," Sunir says. Conros committed much time to helping local efforts to send support quickly to affected regions.

The Chandarias love a good challenge. "Whether the challenge comes from our everyday battles in business, from helping local charitable efforts, or acting as a sounding board for business leaders and politicians alike, we thrive on trying to find a better way to do things," says Sunir.

As Conros Corporation works to replicate its business success for future generations of the Chandaria family, they also consider the community as key beneficiaries of their legacy. "It is hard for someone born in Canada to appreciate the value of freedom – we take it for granted," Sunir explains. "We want our future generations to preserve what we now have and help others who don't by working towards achieving it for them."

# Impunity in Mexico

By Alan Cumyn

Roberto Mora García's body was found one early morning in March last year in Nuevo Laredo, a Mexican town near the U.S. border. He had been stabbed 26 times. Mora was the editorial director of the newspaper *El Mañana* and the editor of the weekly *North Mexico Business*. He had published numerous articles linking local officials with narco-trafficking and exposing former policemen who had gone into the extortion business on behalf of drug traffickers. One man arrested in connection with the crime, Mario Medina, a U.S. citizen, claimed his confession came as a result of torture. He was stabbed to death in jail by his cellmate in May 2004. The murder of Roberto Mora García remains unsolved.

Shocking as this case is, it hardly stands out in Mexico's recent history as what one Mexican journalist calls a developing "narco-democracy." Twenty-four journalists have been murdered in Mexico since 1989, four in 2004 alone. June 2004, for example, saw the murder of lawyer and editor Francisco Javier Ortíz Franco in Tijuana. He had published an article about the furnishing of fake police credentials to a drug cartel. In August, columnist Francisco Arratia Saldierna was tortured and murdered; he also had written on drug trafficking and organized crime. Throughout the year other journalists and authors were threatened, some were beaten up, and some detained and charged for exercising their right to freedom of expression and opinion.

Almost all the cases of murdered journalists since 1989 remain unsolved in what has come to be known as a climate of impunity. The virulent mix of rampant capitalism and the extraordinary profits associated with the illegal drug trade have made freedom of expression not only highly dispensable, but an outright target of attack. With authorities offering few if any effective legal remedies, it feels like open season on journalists and writers who dare shine light in certain corners.

PEN Canada has joined a coalition of Mexican organizations that are fighting back. Ni Uno Más—Not One More—is one such coalition of several Mexican non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that began with a one-day national protest in October 2004 and grew from there. PEN Canada is currently working to convince other PEN centres to join the coalition as well and to strategize with the Mexican NGOs to find the best ways to protect journalists and compel authorities to act in solving these murders.

Another group that PEN Canada supports is the Comisión en Memoria (Accountability Commission) which is following in particular the investigation into Mora's murder. One of the key organizations behind the commission is PEN Mexico, with whom PEN Canada worked closely on the impunity campaign of 2003-04. Another is Cepet, the Center for Journalism and Public Ethics, which was also a founder of Ni Uno Más. Together with these organizations, PEN Canada is working to try to build up a culture of legal accountability within Mexican society.

What sort of strategy might work in ensuring accountability in the murder of Roberto Mora? The Comisión en Memoria will issue a special report on the killing, file complaints with state and federal human rights agencies, publicize the legal proceedings, and, if all domestic legal avenues still fail to produce results, then bring the case to the Inter-American Human Rights Commission. It can be a long, drawn-out, expensive process, but it remains the best chance for success. Without legal accountability, there is no safety for journalists and writers, no protection for freedom of expression, and little hope for a society to deal with the darkness within.

A petition dealing with this issue can be found on page II of this newsletter.

# (petition)

## JUSTICE FOR MEXICAN JOURNALISTS

Lic. Vicente Fox Quesada  
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México  
Fax: +011 52 55 5277 2376  
E-mail: vicente.fox.quesada@presidencia.gob.mx

Excellency,

We, the undersigned, join with PEN Canada to make this urgent appeal on behalf of murdered Mexican journalists.

Since 1989, at least 24 media professionals have been killed. This makes Mexico one of the most dangerous countries in the world in which to practise journalism. In 2004 alone, three reporters lost their lives:

- On August 31, **Francisco Arratia Saldierna**, a columnist with four regional newspapers throughout the state of Tamaulipas, died of a heart attack after being brutally beaten in the city of Matamoros, near the U.S. border.
- **Francisco Ortíz Franco**, deputy editor of the weekly *Zeta*, was shot dead in Tijuana on June 22. The journalist had just left a physical therapy clinic with his two children when masked gunmen in a vehicle pulled up to his car and shot him four times in the head and neck. His children were unharmed.
- **Roberto Javier Mora García**, editorial director of *El Mañana*, was stabbed to death in the Mexico-U.S.A. border town of Nuevo Laredo on March 19. The murder took place early in the morning outside Mora García's home, as he was returning from his work

On February 7, 2005, unidentified gunmen attempted to murder television journalist Jorge Cardona Villega, of Televisión Monterrey, in the north-eastern city of Monterrey. Reporters in the U.S.A.-Mexico border region risk grave danger covering sensitive topics such as drug trafficking.

**PEN Canada considers these attacks to be serious violations of freedom of expression. We therefore call on Mexican authorities to strengthen and deepen the investigations into the murders and attempted assassinations. Further PEN Canada calls for the apprehension and bringing to justice of those responsible and for authorities to commit seriously to bringing an end to violence against the Mexican media.**

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PEN Canada is a centre of the writers' association, International PEN, which works against censorship around the world.

Please photocopy this petition, collect signatures, and mail or fax to:

PEN Canada, 24 Ryerson Avenue, Suite 214, Toronto, Ontario M5T 2P3

Fax 416.703.3870

# Released

**IRAN** Religious cleric and writer Hojjatoleslam Hassan Eshkevari was released from prison on February 6, 2005 after serving two-thirds of his seven-year jail term. A condition of his release is that Eshkevari will no longer be permitted to wear cleric's robes. The cleric was arrested on August 5, 2000 upon his return from a conference on Iran in Berlin sponsored by the Heinrich Böll Foundation. He was charged with apostasy and "corruption on earth", which are capital offences. A verdict was issued in October 2002 of a total of seven years for the "crime" of expression of thought.

**MYANMAR (BURMA)** On January 3, 2005, poet and journalist Aung Myint was released from prison. He was among some 25 political prisoners released ahead of Myanmar's Independence Day celebration on January 4. Aung was charged with violating the State Protection and Emergency Provision Acts and sentenced by a military court on December 20, 2000, to 21 years' imprisonment. He was detained in September 2000, for distributing a press release internationally shortly after security forces had arrested Aung San Suu Kyi.

**CUBA** Raúl Rivero Castañeda was released from prison on November 30, 2004. The 59-year-old poet and journalist was freed for medical reasons, following the release of three other dissidents the same week. Rivero was detained as part of a crackdown on opposition voices that led to the arrest of 75 dissidents in March 2003. Prior to his arrest, Rivero had signed, along with other intellectuals, an open letter to the Cuban government calling for more openness and freedom in the country. After a one-day trial, Rivero was sentenced on April 7, 2003, to 20 years in prison.

**VIETNAM** The administrative detention of writer Nguyen Xuan Tu expired in March 2005. He had been under effective house arrest since May 2000, when he became the subject of a police inquiry for treason. He was suspected of being involved in the drafting of an open letter appealing for democracy prepared by a group of intellectual dissidents. On February 9, 2001, police in Dalat issued a two-year house arrest order against him for "making contact with reactionaries living abroad to sabotage Vietnam" and "demanding the overthrow of the Communist Party". He was reported to be held in total isolation in his Dalat home, with all mail censored and no telephone communication allowed. Nguyen Xuan Tu's formal administrative order was renewed for a further two years in March 2003.

**IRAN** Siamak Pourzand was released from prison in early 2005. The writer and film critic was sentenced to eleven years in prison on April 13, 2002, on charges of "undermining state security through his links with monarchists and counter-revolutionaries." It is widely believed that the charges against him are based on "confessions" that are thought to have been extracted under duress. Pourzand was re-arrested on March 30, 2003, after being conditionally released in December 2002. On April 18, 2004, Pourzand was reportedly admitted to the cardiac care unit of Tehran's Modares Hospital following a heart attack. He was reportedly chained by his feet to the hospital bed. He was still on medical leave from prison as of December 2004.

## In Memoriam: Zouhair Yahyaoui

Former Tunisian PEN Canada Honorary Member Zouhair Yahyaoui died on March 13, after suffering from a heart attack. He was 36 years old. The on-line internet editor of the satirical website TUNeZINE was imprisoned on June 4, 2002, and sentenced to two years in prison on charges of publishing false information, clearly related to his Web site's articles, which were critical of, among other things, the Tunisian judiciary. Yahyaoui was conditionally released after serving half of his sentence on November 18, 2003, and continued to speak out against the repression of freedom of expression.

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