



International Statement For the Freedoms to Express, Publish and Read

With the core purpose of providing access to a wide variety of written works for all, we have come together to support the freedoms to express, publish and read. It is our belief that society needs enlightened citizens who, based on accurate knowledge and information, make choices and participate in democratic progress. Authors, publishers, booksellers and libraries have a role to play in this which should be recognized, valued, and enabled.

True **freedom to read** means being able to choose from the broadest range of books sharing the widest range of ideas. Unrestrained communication is essential to a free society and a creative culture but carries with it the responsibility to resist hate speech, deliberate falsehoods and distortion of facts. Authors, publishers, booksellers and libraries make an essential contribution to guaranteeing this freedom.

Subject to the limits set by international human rights law and standards, authors must have guaranteed **freedom of expression**. Through their work we understand our societies, build empathy, overcome our prejudices and reflect on provocative ideas.

Equally, booksellers and librarians must be free to present the full range of works, across the ideological spectrum, to all. They should not have that freedom constrained by governments or local authorities, individuals or groups seeking to impose their own standards or tastes upon the community at large, even when this is done in the name of the 'community' or of its majority.

For booksellers and librarians to present the broadest range of written works, there must be the **freedom to publish**. Publishers must be free to publish those works which they believe important, including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or might even be considered offensive by some in particular groups.

It is the responsibility and mission of publishers, booksellers and librarians, through their professional judgement, to give full meaning to the freedom to read by providing everyone with access to authors' works. Publishers, librarians, and booksellers do not necessarily endorse every work they make available. While individual publishers and booksellers make their own editorial decisions, access to writings should not be limited on the basis of the personal history or political affiliations of the author.

The risk of self-censorship due to social, political or economic pressures remains high, affecting every part of the chain from writer to reader. Society must create the environment for authors, publishers, booksellers and librarians to fulfil their missions freely.

We therefore call on governments and all other stakeholders to help protect, uphold and promote the three above freedoms – of expression, and to publish and read - in law and in practice.

You can support and sign the statement [here](#).



Background to the statement:

On 25 June 2023, American Booksellers Association, American Library Association, Association of American Publishers and Authors Guild issued a statement whereby they all joined in a re-publishing of a joint [statement](#) from 1953 on the Freedom to Read as part of work to resist a wave of book bans in different parts of the USA, originally written by the Association of American Publishers and the American Libraries Association.

The freedom of expression is protected by a number of international and regional Declarations, Covenants and Conventions.

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

About EIBF

The European and International Booksellers Federation (EIBF) is a non-commercial European and international umbrella organisation representing national booksellers associations and booksellers around the world. Through its member associations, EIBF speaks on behalf of more than 25,000 individual booksellers of all kinds, including brick and mortar and family bookshops, online retailers and book chains. <http://eibf.eu/>

About IAF

The International Authors Forum (IAF) is the voice of authors worldwide, it is a membership body for organizations representing professional creators all over the world. It was formed by a collaboration of author's organizations in 2013 to ensure that professional creators can work together to deal with the challenges they face. With over 85 authors and visual artists organizations as members, the IAF represents over 750,000 professional creators in the world. IAF campaigns for authors worldwide, both at the international and national levels. Taking part in WIPO and UNESCO it ensures authors are heard at the international level and it supports authors with issues they face whether they are global or local. <https://internationalauthors.org/>

About IFLA

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) is the global voice of libraries, representing the interests of the profession and working to improve services worldwide. It benefits from a strong membership, a vibrant professional community, and close collaboration with partners. IFLA champions the belief that people, communities, and organizations need universal and equitable access to information and endorses the principles



of freedom of access to information, ideas, and works of imagination and freedom of expression embodied in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. To this end, the IFLA Advisory Committee on Freedom of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression (FAIFE) works to promote intellectual freedom and achieve the vital mission of supporting libraries in their role as gateways to knowledge and ideas. <https://www.ifla.org>

About IPA

The International Publishers Association (IPA) is the world's largest federation of publishers associations with 101 members in 81 countries. Established in 1896, the IPA is an industry body with a human rights mandate. The IPA's mission is to promote and protect publishing and to raise awareness of publishing as a force for economic, cultural and social development. Working in cooperation with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and numerous international NGOs, the IPA champions the interests of book and journal publishing at national and supranational level. Internationally, the IPA actively opposes censorship and promotes copyright, freedom to publish (including through the IPA Prix Voltaire), and literacy. <https://internationalpublishers.org/>

About PEN International

PEN International is the foremost and largest association of writers which stands at the intersection of literature and human rights to protect free expression around the world. Founded in London in 1921, PEN International – PEN's Secretariat – connects an international community of writers. PEN operates across five continents through over 130 Centres in over 90 countries. It is a forum where writers meet freely to discuss their work; it is also a voice speaking out for writers silenced in their own countries.

PEN International works to promote the PEN Charter to ensure that people everywhere have the freedom to create literature, to impart information and ideas, to express their views, and to access the views, ideas, and literatures of others. We champion the freedom to write, recognizing the power of literature to transform the world.

In 2021, PEN International celebrated its Centenary. More than hundred years since its foundation, today PEN International is recognised as well as a leading international charity and expert on freedom of expression. <https://www.pen-international.org/>