Impact Report

1 April 2022– 31 March 2023

Malorie Blackman, winner of the 2022 PEN Pinter Prize © George Torode
English PEN is one of the world’s first human rights organisations, championing the freedom to write and the freedom to read.

We are the founding centre of PEN International, a worldwide writers’ association with 130 centres in more than 90 countries.

With the support of our members – a community of writers, readers, and activists – we protect freedom of expression whenever it is under attack.

We campaign for writers facing persecution around the world and offer respite residencies to international writers.

We celebrate contemporary international writing through our online magazine, *PEN Transmissions*, and we award literary grants for translating new works into English.

We bring together outstanding writers, readers and translators for unforgettable conversations and we celebrate courageous writing with annual literary prizes.

In 2022, English PEN’s focus has been on defending, supporting and championing the freedom to write and the freedom to read.

Over the last year, we have led on and joined significant campaigns for both individual writers in times of risk and wider, national issues of freedom of expression. We continue to champion writers of courage, supporting and celebrating translation through events, online publications and prizes. Behind the scenes, we provide advice and guidance to writers and publishers, all the while helping shape draft legislation to ensure freedom of expression is protected by law.

This report details some of the highlights from the year gone by, made possible through your generosity.

English PEN is only as strong as its community of supporters.

It is thanks to you that we can continue to fight for the freedom to write and the freedom to read, directly supporting individual writers as well as campaigning for systemic change at policy level.

Thank you.

Ruth Borthwick, Chair of English PEN
Working closely with PEN International, sister PEN centres, and other like-minded organisations, we raise awareness and provide bespoke and concrete support to at-risk colleagues – including by sending appeal letters to the relevant authorities, writing messages of solidarity, platforming their writing, and hosting vigils and events.

**Over 2022–23, our Writers at Risk programme:**

- Hosted three respite residencies for international writers, providing them with the time, space, and funds to relax and work on their own projects. Our writers in residence included writer, lawyer, and human rights defender Nurcan Kaya, journalist Buse Söğütlü, and author Sema Kaygusuz.

- Sent over 280 letters from over 20 countries through our letter-writing campaign PENWrites to 10 imprisoned writers.

- Offered complimentary London Library membership to a total of seven writers from Afghanistan, Belarus, Eritrea, Türkiye, and the Philippines, thanks to our ongoing partnership with the Library.

- Appointed British-Egyptian writer and activist Alaa Abd El-Fattah as an Honorary Member of English PEN.

In November 2022, we warmly welcomed the news of Kurdish journalist and poet Nedim Türfent’s release after more than six years in prison in Türkiye.

Nedim Türfent has been a key case of concern for PEN since his arrest in 2016, and in 2020 was appointed an Honorary Member of English PEN. Nedim Türfent was one of the first writers to be featured in PENWrites, our letter-writing campaign in solidarity with writers at risk, through which he received hundreds of messages of support from all over the world.

While in prison, Nedim Türfent also wrote ‘Kuş Aynası,’ a collection of poetry. Together with sister PEN centres, English PEN translated and published several of his poems with the aim of sharing and amplifying his voice, despite the attempts to silence him.

We are hugely relieved that Türfent has finally regained his freedom and remain in close contact.

‘I want you to know that your letters, which have rendered iron curtains meaningless and ineffective, have filled my two-step-long cell with resistance, resolve and hope.’

Nedim Türfent
We champion literature beyond national and linguistic borders, and beyond conventional literary expectations.

We do this through our PEN Translates grant for UK publishers, PEN Presents grant for sample translations, online publishing, events programming, including our annual International Translation Day, and advocacy.
In 2022–23 English PEN raised freedom of expression concerns regarding UK legislation, including the following:

- Human Rights Act and the Bill of Rights
- National Security Act
- Online Safety Act
- Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act

**Anti-SLAPP**

Over the last year, English PEN’s UK campaigns work heavily focused on SLAPPs (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation). SLAPPs are lawsuits initiated by powerful individuals, with the intent of shutting down acts of public participation, such as public interest journalism, peaceful protest or boycotts, advocacy, whistleblowing, NGOs and academic comments. SLAPPs are a serious threat to democracy as they impede the exercise of freedom of expression, assembly and association.

Throughout 2023, English PEN’s role as co-chair of the UK Anti-SLAPP Coalition included convening media organisations, lawyers, human rights defenders and other members of civil society together in solidarity with targets of SLAPPs. We drafted the Model UK anti-SLAPP law, in collaboration and consultation with solicitors and barristers, which was published in October 2022 and presented in the House of Parliament.

We continue to work closely with partners from across the sector to see the draft bill made into law.

‘[The Model UK anti-SLAPP law] would provide even tougher requirements for cases to really show a likelihood of success’

Catherine Belton

**English PEN continues to provide practical support and confidential advice to authors, academics and publishers around issues of freedom of expression.**

‘English PEN approached me when I was under extreme duress. Rather than being viewed as an expert in the field who had written an evidence-based book in measured tones, I was alarmed to find myself being presented by politicians and newspaper columnists as an ideologue who was denigrating British history. PEN reached out to me during this desperate time and having such a great ally gives you the courage to continue writing. My next book is now in press thanks to the support I received.’

Anonymous
We bring outstanding writers, translators and audiences together for unforgettable conversations.

In 2022–23, our events programme continued both online and in person, reaching audiences of over 4,000 from venues including the British Library, the Southbank Centre, the London Library, Folkestone Book Festival, and the London Book Fair, for our annual English PEN Literary Salon.

Following the shocking attack on Salman Rushdie at an event in New York on 12 August, English PEN worked closely with partner organisations and key individuals to host an event at the British Library in October 2022 in recognition of Rushdie’s writing and activism.

The event was supported by PEN International, Index on Censorship, Article 19, Humanists UK and Penguin UK; as organisations concerned with the protection of freedom of expression, we wanted to recognise Rushdie’s tireless contributions to this global cause.

The event was hosted by English PEN Trustee Georgina Godwin and consisted of readings and personal reflections from the following speakers:

This exclusive event, delivered in partnership with Christie’s, comprised annotated first edition books and works of art from internationally renowned contemporary artists and authors. Each work was personally annotated by the artist or author to include their insights, recollections, thoughts or illustrations, creating a unique and covetable collector’s item.

The sale comprised more than 80 annotated First Edition books by internationally renowned writers, including work by Margaret Atwood, Hilary Mantel, Salman Rushdie, John le Carré, Sebastian Faulks, Ben Okri, Ian McEwan, Bernardine Evaristo, and Philippe Sands, and art works from highly esteemed artists Anish Kapoor, Tracey Emin, Antony Gormley, Claudette Johnson, Ai Weiwei and Edmund de Waal.

‘The process of publication (however welcome and necessary) is a process of estrangement. Annotation gives your book back to you, but presents it multiplied. [...] A special kind of memory comes into play – how you were when such a phrase arrived, where you were: the way the light fell into the room. [...] You realise, if you didn’t know it already, that there’s another book behind the book, and behind that, a series of shadow volumes, stretching back to infancy, before you could write at all.’

Hilary Mantel
Our prizes recognise and award contributions to literature and freedom of expression and bring attention to global cases of persecution and censorship.

In 2022–23, we presented three awards to outstanding writers – the PEN Pinter Prize, the PEN Hessell-Tiltman Prize, and the PEN Ackerley Prize. Funded by and in honour of former PEN members and significant literary figures, these prizes recognise excellence in historical nonfiction, literary autobiography, and a courageous and unflinching approach to the written word.

- Malorie Blackman won the 2022 PEN Pinter Prize, held at the British Library. She named Dr Abduljalil Al-Singace, an award-winning academic, activist, and blogger from Bahrain, the 2022 Writer of Courage.
- Frances Stonor Saunders won the 2022 PEN Ackerley Prize for her memoir *The Suitcase: Six Attempts to Cross a Border* (Jonathan Cape).
- Francesca Stavrakopoulou won the 2022 PEN Hessell-Tiltman Prize for *God: An Anatomy* (Picador).

‘There are many fearless authors who write for young adults and children, tackling complex issues in an entertaining, informative, understandable, and unflinching way. That’s why I know that, although I may be the first author of children’s and YA books to receive this prestigious award, I certainly won’t be the last.’

Malorie Blackman, 2022 PEN Pinter Prize
We provide a platform for international and translated literature, essays and interviews.

PEN Transmissions is English PEN’s online magazine for international and translated literature. In 2022–23, personal essays and interviews on PEN Transmissions reached 29,000 readers in 163 countries.

Across the year:

- We commissioned essays and interviews by 31 writers and translators in 26 countries and featured voices as diverse as Zadie Smith, Mona Arshi, Yara Rodrigues Fowler, June Bellebono, Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai, Pajtim Statovci, Malorie Blackman, Ann-Helén Laestadius, Rogelio Braga, Norman Erikson Pasaribu, Montazé Mehr, Julian Barnes and Malorie Blackman
- We published work in collaboration with StAnza Poetry Festival, the International Booker Prize, Essex Writers House and Metal, and the AKO Caine Prize.

All Walls Collapse

In June 2022, we published All Walls Collapse: Stories of Separation in partnership with Comma Press. The specially commissioned anthology of new short fiction in translation marks 10 years of PEN Translates and was developed as part of English PEN’s Centenary.

With Comma Press, we toured All Walls Collapse at major UK literary festivals, with events including: Hay Festival (Anton Hur, Geetanjali Shree and Krisztina Töth); London Book Fair (Constantia Soteriou and Lina Protopapa); Edinburgh International Book Festival (Geetanjali Shree and Daisy Rockwell); WOMAD Festival (Larissa Boehning and Lyn Marven with Georgina Godwin); At Reform Radio, Manchester (Maya Abu Al-Hayyat); Cheltenham Literature Festival (Paulo Scott with Ann Morgan); Manchester International Book Festival (Juan Pablo Villalobos and Paulo Scott with Yara Rodrigues Fowler).
Your support helps us protect freedom of expression and promote literature across borders.

We are deeply grateful to our community of members, supporters and partners who help us to celebrate great literature and the transmission of ideas in myriad ways.

We’ve been celebrating the written word and defending freedom of expression for 100 years, and we want to continue doing so for many more to come. But our work can only continue thanks to the generosity of our members, partners and donors, whose support allows us to keep going. If you would like to find out more about how you can help, please contact Charlotte Aston, Head of Development at: charlotte@englishpen.org
**Governance & Management**

English PEN is a company limited by guarantee number 5747142 (England and Wales) and a registered charity, number 1125610. We are governed by a board of trustees who are appointed to our board following an open recruitment process and ratified by our members at the AGM each year.

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Daniel Gorman

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Can Yeğinsu

“PEN isn’t a luxury. It’s a necessity.”
Margaret Atwood

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