

# AMSTERDAM WORLD BOOK CAPITAL 2008

# THREATS TO THE OPEN BOOK

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON NEO-CENSORSHIP

18-20 SEPTEMBER AMSTERDAM



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INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON NEO-CENSORSHIP: THREATS TO THE OPEN BOOK

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'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'. Article 19, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The Board of Amsterdam World Book Capital has the pleasure of inviting you to the International Symposium on Neo-censorship that will take place from September 18-20, 2008.

The main objective of this symposium is to examine on an international level the erosion of free expression. The concept of neo-censorship refers to a type of censorship that is not imposed by any state authority but by private parties. It is becoming increasingly evident that there are growing threats to the freedom of expression and the free dissemination of ideas and texts, which are being kept on a tight rein or even deterred by censorship-like phenomena. These include self-censorship, market censorship and silent repression and threats to writers, journalists and publishers. The censorship-like phenomena of recent times could in the longer term have a stifling impact on free expression and the freedom of information, and thus on the overall quality of society, with drastic consequences for the whole province of writing and publishing. That is why there is an urgent need for authors, publishers, librarians and booksellers to take stock of neo-censorship's rise and determine what they can do to counter it.

The symposium will be attended by authors, publishers, librarians and booksellers from all over the world and is organized in collaboration with Index on Censorship and Amnesty International. The official language of the symposium is English. On the eve of the symposium, at the opening ceremony on Thursday September 18th the IPA Freedom to Publish Prize will be presented.

Venue 18 September: Portuguese Synagogue, Mr. Visserplein 3, Amsterdam

Venue 19 and 20 September: De Balie, Kleine-Gartmanplantsoen 10, Amsterdam

Symposium: € 40 including lunches

Opening session: free of charge, registration is necessary

You can register by filling in the registration form on our website [www.amsterdamworldbookcapital.com](http://www.amsterdamworldbookcapital.com)  
Also you can book your hotel online via this site.

PROGRAMME INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON NEO-CENSORSHIP:

THURSDAY, 18 SEPTEMBER 2008

20.00 hour

#### Opening ceremony

Key-note speech by Breyten Breytenbach, writer.

Presentation of the IPA Freedom to Publish Prize 2008 to Ragip Zarakolu by Ana Maria Cabanellas, President of the International Publishers Association (IPA).

Interview with Ragip Zarakolu.

IPA established the IPA Freedom to Publish Prize to honour each year a person or an organisation that has made an important contribution to the defence and promotion of freedom to publish anywhere in the world. Ragip Zarakolu will be awarded the 2008 IPA Freedom to Publish Prize for his exemplary courage in upholding the freedom to publish. Former laureates are the Iranian publisher Shahla Lahiji (2006) and the Zimbabwean publisher Trevor N'cube (2007).

FRIDAY, 19 SEPTEMBER 2008

9.30 - 10.00 Registration and welcome

10.00 - Word of Welcome

10.15 - 12.00 **Censorship, freedom of expression and multiculturalism**

Western countries have witnessed the large-scale immigration of different population groups, certainly since the last century. This has raised new questions about freedom of expression. Some population groups are easily offended when written or spoken about and are calling for more sensitive language use. Others feel that you should and must have the liberty to say anything you like in order to make it possible to discuss subjects relating to different population groups. Does a change in a population's composition from (relative) homogeneity to greater multiformity in religious and moral beliefs have consequences for the restrictions on freedom of expression?

Session chaired by Naema Tahir, UK/The Netherlands writer and an expert in human rights law for the Council of Europe

**Addresses by**

Abdelkader Benali, Morocco/The Netherlands, writer

Nelleke Noordervliet, The Netherlands, writer

William Nygaard, Norway, publisher

Kenan Malik, India/UK, writer, lecturer and broadcaster

Panel discussion

12.00 - 13.30 Lunch

13.30 - 15.00 **Censorship and national security**

How is the fight against terrorism influencing freedom of expression? Fighting terrorism often goes hand in hand with the fight against extremism. When does extremism actually pose a threat to national security? To what extent should legislation anticipate on terrorist threats, or is this anticipation actually a hidden agenda for governments to reaffirm their grip on citizens? What is the role of internet in getting round these new laws? Is internet really a powerful medium for dissidents, or does it also create a false and superficial notion of openness?

Session chaired by: Rohan Jayasekera, UK, writer and associate editor for Index on Censorship

**Addresses by**

Breyten Breytenbach, South Africa/France, writer and poet

Egbert Dommering, The Netherlands, professor of Information Law, University of Amsterdam

Kees Schaepman, The Netherlands, journalist (former chair Dutch Union of Journalists)

Ragip Zarakolu, Turkey, publisher and IPA Freedom to Publish Prize laureate 2008

Panel discussion

15.30 - 17.00 **Censorship and public morality**

According to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), a curtailment of the right to freedom of expression is in principle possible on grounds of the 'protection of morals', in particular regarding religion (but only insofar as necessary in a democratic society). National governments generally enjoy a wide margin of appreciation in this sphere. How do lawyers, politicians, writers and journalists view this? Should there be more room for 'national interpretations' of freedom of expression and its restrictions, or should we, in an increasingly global society, be moving towards a more uniform standard, such as exists for the prohibition of torture, because in that case there is no margin for [national] appreciation.

## Addresses by

Boris Dittrich, The Netherlands/USA, advocacy director for Human Rights Watch;  
Shahla Lahiji, Iran, publisher, IPA Freedom to Publish Prize laureate 2006;  
Barber van de Pol, The Netherlands, writer and translator and chair PEN The Netherlands;  
Paul Sturges, UK, professor of Library Studies Department of Information Science, Loughborough University and chair of IFLA Freedom of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression Committee

## Panel discussion

## Cocktails

## SATURDAY 20 SEPTEMBER 2008

9.30 - 10.00 Arrival and welcome

10.00 -12.00 **Censorship and China: a case study following the Olympic Games**

The Olympic Games will have ended by September 2008. International organizations have focused considerable attention on human rights, especially on freedom of expression. Promises by the IOC and the Chinese government will probably not have been kept by the time September 2008 comes around. Were the campaigns useful? Should people have been more fervent in advocating freedom of speech in China, or precisely the opposite? Are there more or are there fewer opportunities to help promote this freedom in the wake of the Olympic Games? What is the role of internet, and bloggers in particular, in altering the current notions of freedom of expression in China?

12.00 - 13.30 lunch

13.30 - 15.00 Closing Session

## Addresses by

Boris Dittrich, The Netherlands/USA, advocacy director for Human Rights Watch;  
Lilian Gonçalves - Ho Kang You, international board member of Amnesty International  
(with reservation)  
Rohan Jayasekera, UK, writer and associate editor for Index on Censorship;  
Bjorn Smith-Simonsen, Norway, publisher and chair of IPA Freedom to Publish Committee;  
Sara Whyatt, UK, coordinator PEN Writers in Prison Committee

Rapporteur général: Chris Keulemans, writer and journalist

Closing of the symposium by Judith Belinfante, chair of the Amsterdam World Book Capital Foundation

Sponsors: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, City of Amsterdam, Foundation for Democracy and Media, Dutch Foundation for Translations and Literature, Amsterdam Top City and Dutch Publishers Association (NUV/GAU)



Freedom of expression and censorship will be recurrent themes in a wide range of cultural activities during the month of September in Amsterdam. See for a complete survey [www.amsterdamworldbookcapital.com/agenda](http://www.amsterdamworldbookcapital.com/agenda).