

Books, Newspapers and the Arts against Censorship

The case of Turkey

Freedom of expression and democracy are two related concepts. Ideas must be able to circulate freely. This is the story of liberalism and democracy from the time of the European enlightenment. Since the 1970s, the meaning of the word censorship has evolved. It is no longer just an institutional ban, but also a process of filtering out opinions, leading to ideological and artistic conformism. The broadening of the meaning of the concept of censorship resulted from the censors' increasing interest in new media that are more popular than print.

In many States, it has become important to silence the press or web news organizations whose function is to give the public the means to develop their critical sense, even their political judgment.

Violence against journalists, information control, muzzling of dissenting voices, freedom of speech, freedom of the press and freedom of creation seem more than ever in danger around the world.

What is the nature of censorship and self-censorship today? Who threatens information and why? What is the form of censorship in the era of neo-liberalism?

To discuss these issues, Hystart invited speakers from among the most prestigious organizations defending freedom of expression to the Geneva Theater "les Salons": Eugene Schoulgin, Vice President of PEN International and Gérard Tschopp, President of Reporters Without Borders (RSF) Switzerland. The presence of these two organizations will provide a global picture of the perilous situation of freedom of expression.

Eugene Schoulgin, a Norwegian writer translated in many languages, lives between Norway and Istanbul. He has defended freedom of

expression for many years and can be considered a specialist of many countries, including Turkey and Afghanistan, where he has been instrumental in reviving the publishing industry.

Former director of the French-Swiss Radio, **Gérard Tschopp** is President of RSF Switzerland. RSF is the world's leading press freedom organization.

Particular attention will be paid to Turkey, which is the leading country in terms of judicialization of freedom of expression in the world. Publishers have been sued more than anywhere else in the world. RSF considers Turkey to be the world's largest prison for journalists.

Hystart also invited prominent figures of the resistance against censorship to this event: the writer **Asli Erdogan**, who was imprisoned from August to December 2016 for terrorism, and the publisher **Ragip Zarakolu**, who with his Belge publishing house, founded in 1977, broke one taboo after the other (Armenian genocide, Kurdish issue, Kemalism, etc.). He also spent time in prison several times, the last time from November 2011 to April 2012. Both of them are now living in exile.

We cannot even begin to describe how honored we are by the presence of these two giants. Asli Erdogan, who was translated in more than 20 languages, will also be present at the Geneva Book Fair (25-29 April).

The last speakers will be **Alain Navarra**, President of Hystart, and Guillaume Perrier. Alain Navarra is a sociologist, art historian and a long-time human rights defender (particularly of minority rights). He is also a specialist in artistic freedoms. **Guillaume Perrier** is a journalist. As former correspondent of Le Monde in Turkey, he is a great specialist of Turkey. His latest book (*Dans la tête de Recep Tayyip Erdogan* (Solin/Actes Sud)) came out in January.

The debate will be moderated by a respected journalist, **Thérèse Obrecht**, who is a specialist of Eastern European countries and freedom

of expression as former President of RSF Switzerland.

Let us meet at the Théâtre les Salons (Rue Jean-F. Bartholoni 6 1204 Geneva) from 18:00 on 26 April 2018. Must RSVP by 24 April at: contact@hystart.org

An **exhibition** retracing the saga of the **Belge publishing house** against censorship will be on display at the ***Maison des Associations*** (Rue des Savoises 15 Geneva) from 25 to 29 April 2018.

More about the organizer:

Hystart was co-founded by Alain Navarra and Alexis Krikorian. It is an organization supporting the development of cultural democracy in Armenia and neighboring countries. Hystart therefore promotes cultural diversity and the freedom to participate in cultural life. Its two main aims are the promotion of human rights and the support of socially challenging and politically meaningful contemporary artistic creation in the region.