



On Dialogue While Bombs Are Falling:
PEN Ukraine Addresses the Global
Intellectual Community

PEN UKRAINE: ON DIALOGUE WHILE BOMBS ARE FALLING

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Das ukrainische Kapitel des PEN Clubs begründet in diesem Offenen Brief an die internationale Gemeinschaft ihren Boykott russländischer Kultur: "the only appropriate subject for our discussions [...] must be about the need for an immediate cessation of Russia's war crimes, not about the merits of its culture."

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As members of PEN Ukraine, writers in a variety of languages and representing a number of nationalities, and recognizing that, in a time of war, all who work in cultural fields bear a special responsibility both to culture itself and to the lives of those under siege, we would like to address the international intellectual community.

Ever since February 24th, when Russia launched a full-scale war against our country, we've been receiving daily requests to engage in dialogue with Russian intellectuals on the question of reconciliation. At the same time, a number of our colleagues abroad have reacted harshly to our call for a boycott of Russian culture. This reaction only serves to distract the world's attention from the war crimes being committed daily by Russia in its war against Ukraine.

Our concern is that, in Russia's totalitarian society, culture is an instrument of influence and propaganda, and can be used to obscure the countless war crimes being committed by Russia against Ukraine. Today, in the name of "Russkiy Mir", Russian soldiers are murdering civilians, bombing hospitals, elementary schools, theaters, libraries, and universities, destroying not only Ukrainian culture as a whole but also the diverse cultures of the many minority communities living in Ukraine.

We remember those few individual representatives of Russian culture who, eight years ago, when Russia occupied Crimea and a part of our eastern territories, stood up in defense of Ukrainian territorial integrity. We also value the support of those who speak out against the war today. While we ourselves have often expressed our support for those writers, scholars, and human rights advocates who've openly opposed the Kremlin, we have to assert that, as long as bombs and missiles are falling on us, dialogue about reconciliation is impossible.

Today, and until that moment when the last Russian soldier has left Ukrainian territory, the only appropriate subject for our discussions with the international intellectual community must be about the need for an immediate cessation of Russia's war crimes, not about the merits of its culture.

Die englische Übersetzung des Briefes mitsamt der vollständigen Liste der Unterzeichnenden kann [hier](#) auf der Seite von PEN Ukraine gefunden werden.

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