



ICORN
INTERNATIONAL CITIES
OF REFUGE NETWORK

FOUNDING CHARTER

June 11, 2006

I. The Foundations for ICORN

The International Cities of Refuge Network Charter builds on collective assertions regarding the protection of freedoms of expression outlined in such documents as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (art. 19) and the charter of International PEN.

Furthermore ICORN adheres to the intentions and ideas formulated by the International Parliament of Writers in 1993, which served to lay the foundation for INCA (International Network of Cities of Asylum). The European Charter of Cities of Asylum was adopted on May 31, 1995 by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe. INCA was formally declared disbanded primo June 2005.

Writers have been and still are the targets of threats and persecution. It is therefore necessary for the international community to formulate and implement an appropriate response. ICORN, an organization that is both decentralized and coordinated, aims to meet this challenge by providing a functioning network of cities and regions that will 1) provide shelter for persecuted writers, 2) defend democratic values, 3) advance freedom of expression and 4) promote international solidarity.

ICORN intends to minister to the development of hospitality and mutually beneficial relationships between persecuted writers and their host ICORN member-cities. ICORN will also work to advance a spirit of solidarity between individual writers and their host cities, among the writers within the network, and among the participating cities and regions of refuge.

II. The ICORN Administration Centre

The International Cities of Refuge Network Administration Centre is located in Stavanger, Norway. The Municipality of Stavanger, through Sølvsberget KF (Stavanger Cultural Centre), is economically and legally responsible for the ICORN Administration Centre. The board of Sølvsberget KF has made an initial commitment to the establishment and implementation of the ICORN Administration Centre for a probation period of three years. However, this has been undertaken with the clear intention that it will become a permanent institution.

Sølvsberget KF's board of directors has appointed an ICORN Project Manager to work with an

advisory group appointed by the general assembly.

The Project Manager, together with a provisional advisory group prepared the ICORN Charter and Terms of Agreement drafts. These documents were discussed and approved by the general assembly on June 11th, 2006, and the new advisory group was appointed. This group consists of a representative from PEN, a representative ICORN Guest Writer and three member-city representatives. The advisory group members will be discussed and adjusted as appropriate at the General Assembly in 2007.

III. The ICORN Administration Centre's Responsibilities

The ICORN Administration Centre's primary tasks are to coordinate and assist the cities within the network through consistent contact with member-cities/regions and to establish connections between persecuted writers and potential cities of refuge.

According to the ICORN Administration Centre's agreement with International PEN's Writers in Prison Committee (WiPC), ICORN will supply the designated coordinators of member-cities/regions with necessary documentation concerning writers in need of shelter and protection, ensuring that the writer in question is a writer and is also threatened, persecuted or imprisoned as a consequence of something he/she has written.

ICORN's criteria for evaluating the applicant writers can be summarized as follows:

- A. The applicant must be a writer. The term 'writer' is to include novelists, non-fiction writers, playwrights, poets, editors, translators, publishers, journalists and cartoonists.
- B. The applicant must be either:
 1. At risk as a direct consequence of his/her writing—whether the writer is in danger of being killed, abducted, physically attacked or “disappearing”. In a case where a writer is threatened with any of the above, an appraisal as to likelihood of such a threat being carried out will be made on an individual case/country basis by the Writers in Prison Committee of International PEN.
 2. Sentenced to (or at risk of being sentenced to) a prison term by the authorities in his/her country as a direct consequence of his/her writing. (This excludes cases in which writers have been charged or are at risk of being charged with inciting hatred or violence through their writing unless it can be ascertained that the charges against them have been fabricated.)
 3. Unable to express themselves freely through his/her writing for fear of persecution due to the probable actions of the government or other non-government entities of the country in which he/she habitually resides. In such cases the writer may be able to return to his/her own country after a period of working freely abroad.

ICORN's decisions regarding which writers will be taken into the network will be based on information from the Writers in Prison Committee of International PEN. The Writers in Prison Committee will make an evaluation regarding the authenticity of the declared danger to the individual writer and/or provide an informed assessment of the likelihood that any threatened persecution will be carried out.

IV. The ICORN Agreements

The affiliation between ICORN member cities/regions and the ICORN Administration Centre is regulated through an agreement (appendix 1) accepted and signed by both parties. The agreement can be summarized as follows:

A. When signing an agreement with an ICORN City of Refuge the ICORN Administration Centre agrees to:

1. Provide informed recommendations regarding potential writers for the City of Refuge
2. Maintain reliable and open communications with and among Cities of Refuge, advising the city on matters pertaining to the writer
3. In cooperation with member-city coordinators, maintain a website and newsletter in which the hosted writers can promote their work
4. Collaborate with relevant human rights groups and organizations
5. Facilitate seminars and literary events for writers within the network
6. Actively recruit new cities of refuge
7. Conduct fundraising activities for ICORN
8. Establish and maintain an Emergency Fund

B. In return the City of Refuge agrees to:

1. Arrange for the relocation of a persecuted writer and his/her family within the City of Refuge
2. Provide the writer and his/her family with necessary assistance and practical support over a period of two years
3. Appoint one City of Refuge Coordinator to administer legal and practical matters and to assist the writer with integration and general concerns
4. Provide the writer and his/her family with an appropriate dwelling
5. Provide the writer with an appropriate scholarship/grant, to be paid directly to the writer in monthly instalments
6. Help the writer integrate and/or cooperate with the local community, both socially and artistically
7. Promote translation of the writer's work and organize exchanges and debate in the city's libraries, universities and schools

8. Sign and adhere to the ICORN Agreements

Signatures

Members of the General Assembly

Sølvberget KF
ICORN