Events in:

Austria Freiroud Freies Radio Innsbruck; BUNDESPUNKT and Shakespeare & Company bookstores, Vienna; Bolivia PEN Bolivia, Santa Cruz; Bosnian and Herzegovina PEN Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo; Bulgaria MENAR Film Festival, Sofia; Canada ADAB Canada, Amateurs de la Diapora Arabe et Berbère au Canada and BERAO Editions, Montreal; Croatia Croatian PEN, Writers Society and Bookos Li-Club, Zagreb; Denmark Danish PEN, Copenhagen; Egypt Cairo Literature Festival, Cairo; France Maison des écrivains et de la littérature, Paris; Bahá’íh Khájíhvání, Strasbourg; Germany Agora – Gesellschaft für Literatur, Kunst und Kultur e. V.; Bad Oeynhausen; internationales litteraturfestivalberlin and HAU Hebbel am Ufer, Berlin; Lenaus-Grundscheule, Berlin; Ibn Rushd Fund and Letträtage, Berlin; Europasächsisches Gymnasium Bertha von Suttner, Berlin; Schliemann-Grammar School, Berlin; indieberlin; Willy Brandt Schule, Berlin; Amnesty International, Bremen; Literaturehaus Villa Augustin, Dresden; YOP year of performance, Rotraut de Neve, Hamburg; Writers’ Room Hamburg and Filmhau Hamburg, Münchirische Hannover; International School Hannover Region; Deutsches Literaturinstitut Leipzig; Verband der Freien Lektorinnen und Lektoren e. V., VFL, and Regionalgruppe Rhein/Ruhr, Münster; Internationale Armin T. Wegner Gesellschaft e.V. and Verband Deutscher SchriftstellerInnen, Sektion Bergisches Land, Wuppertal; Greece Hellenic Authors’ Society and the Poets Circle, Athens; Hong Kong Chris Song, Central Hong Kong; Italy Iournal la macchina sognante and Poetry group multiversi, Bologna; UAAR, Union of Rationalist Atheists and Agnostics and Amnesty International, La Spezia; O Code Mog, Milano; University of Napoli L’Orientale, Napoli; Griot Bookshop and editoriariba, Rome; UAAR and Amnesty International, Rome; Associazioni POP, Sassari; UAAR and Associazione Adelaide Aglietta, Turin; UAAR and Amnesty International, Bari; ITTE – Itinerari teatralizzati, Villacidro; Latvia Literature Without Borders, Riga; Lebanon Jahida Wehbe, Beirut; Mauritius Lidakasyon pu Travayer, Port Louis; Mexico PEN México, Mexico City; Myanmar PEN Myanmar Center, Yangon; Netherlands PEN Centre at Writers Unlimited Festival, PEN Oxfam Novib Awards, The Hague; New Zealand Courtney Sino Meredith, Auckland; Nicaragua PEN Nicaragua, Managua; Nigeria PEN Nigeria, Obafemi Awolowo University Ile; PEN Nigeria, University of Ibadan; PEN Nigeria, Freedom Park, Lagos; Norway Erling Kittelsen, Oslo; Palestine A. M. Qattan Foundation, Ramallah; Portugal PEN Clube Português and Sociedade Portuguesa de Autores, Lisbon; Russia Russian poets, Sakhrov Center, Moscow; Serbia Cultural Center Grad, Belgrade; Singapore MEI and Yale-NUS College, Singapore; Spain Basque PEN, Bilbao; Sweden Swedish PEN, Göteborg Litteraturhus; Swedish PEN, Kulturhuset Stadsteatern Stockholm; Switzerland Literaturhaus Bozal; Verein SCHRONK! Biel/Bienne; index Wort und Wirkung, Zürich; UK Scottish PEN, Edinburgh; Scottish PEN, Glasgow; Central Library, Lancaster; Ledbury Poetry Festival, Herefordshire; English PEN, London; Norwich Arts Centre, Joanna Guthrie, Norwich; Wales PEN Cynru, Cardiff; Ukraine Book Maestro Club, Cherkassy; Ukrainian Literary Center, Kiev; YE Bookstore, Lutsk; 99 Poetry Club, Zaporizhzhya; USA MFA Program in Creative Writing, Boise State University; Agnes Scott College, Decatur; International Publishing Program, University of Iowa; Emily Ferranti, Andy Young, and Khaled Hegazi, New Orleans; Rattlesnake, First Tuesdays and Terraza 7 Café, New York; PEN American Center, Brooklyn Museum, New York; Kelly Writers House, Philadelphia; Peace/Works and The Green Line Café, Philadelphia; Teatro Paraguas, Santa Fe; Kismet Creative Center, Deborah Wodraska, St Louis

For more information about the venues and times of the worldwide readings see www.worldwide-reading.com

16. international literature festival berlin

7.–17.09.16

Life and Freedom for Ashraf Fayadh

Worldwide Reading on 14th January, 2016

Appeal for a worldwide reading on 14th January, 2016

The international literature festival Berlin (ilb) calls on all individuals, schools and cultural institutions who care about justice and freedom to participate in a worldwide reading of selected poems and other texts in support of Ashraf Fayadh, on 14 January 2016.

Ashraf Fayadh, a 35-year-old Palestinian poet and art activist, has been sentenced to death by a Saudi court on 17 November 2015 for the “crime” of apostasy. He was denied access to a lawyer throughout his detention and trial.

Fayadh has been a key figure in taking Saudi contemporary art to a global audience. Chris Dercon, the director of Tate Modern, and a friend of the poet, described him as “someone who is indispensible and unique.”

Besides remaining silent, Fayadh also stands accused of blasphemy and promoting atheism through his collection of poetry, Instructions With Pen, published in 2008. Fayadh has maintained that the poems are “just about being [(a) Palestinian refugee] – about cultural and philosophical matters. But the religious enemies explained it as destructive ideas against God.”

The ilb would like to work with the fact of this legal process, show that it is not Fayadh who is guilty but rather Saudi Arabia that is openly guilty of disregarding human rights and the rule of law. In various surveys the kingdom continuously ranks as one of the least free countries in the world. According to Human Rights Watch, Saudi Arabia’s ever more repressive laws now criminalize free expression and give the authorities excessive police powers that are not subject to judicial oversight.

Ashraf Fayadh’s case is not the story of one man, but is crucial for all those who care about the freedom of expression that is supposed to be protected by Western governments who claim to value freedom and democracy above all. Right now Saudi Arabia sits on the UN Human Rights Council, a body whose members are supposedly those who uphold the highest standards of civil liberties. Saudi Arabia is there since 2003 thanks to secret vote-trading deals conducted with the UK, as revealed by WikiLeaks. Other Western countries keep newspapers and legitimate magazines behind Saudi borders in order to keep all flowing towards themselves. Caught in the current are ordinary people like Ashraf Fayadh, whose rights go unheeded in the kingdom and abroad.

Among all the most outrageous examples by Western leaders against 13, in the realm of war and threats of retaliation, there has been no word about Saudi Arabia’s role in keeping up the threat of force. This is more so the case for Western leaders that are now Saudi Arabia is there since 2013 thanks to secret vote-trading deals conducted with the UK, as revealed by WikiLeaks. Other Western countries keep newspapers and legitimate magazines behind Saudi borders in order to keep all flowing towards themselves. Caught in the current are ordinary people like Ashraf Fayadh, whose rights go unheeded in the kingdom and abroad.

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With this worldwide reading, we demand that the UK and US governments pressure Saudi Arabia to stop putting political prisoners on death row and to grant Ashraf Fayadh immediate release.

We further demand that the Western nations demand Saudi Arabia to release all prisoners of conscience, as a first step towards pressuring Saudi Arabia to improve its human rights situation.

We also call on Western governments, especially in the UK and the US, to intervene on behalf of Ashraf Fayadh to pressure Saudi Arabia to improve its human rights situation. We also call on Western governments, especially in the UK and the US, to intervene on behalf of Ashraf Fayadh to pressure Saudi Arabia to improve its human rights situation.

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Please contact the ilb if you would like to participate.

worldwidelreading@literaturefestival.com

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