



International Statement on the Freedom of Expression, and the Freedoms to Publish and Read

With the core purpose of providing access to a wide variety of written works for all, we have come together to support the freedoms to express, publish and read. It is our belief that society needs enlightened citizens who, based on accurate knowledge and information, make choices and participate in democratic progress. Authors, publishers, booksellers and libraries have a role to play in this which should be recognized, valued, and enabled.

True **freedom to read** means being able to choose from the broadest range of books sharing the widest range of ideas. Unrestrained communication is essential to a free society and a creative culture but carries with it the responsibility to resist hate speech, deliberate falsehoods and distortion of facts. Authors, publishers, booksellers and libraries make an essential contribution to guaranteeing this freedom.

Subject to the limits set by international human rights law and standards, authors must have guaranteed **freedom of expression**. Through their work we understand our societies, build empathy, overcome our prejudices and reflect on provocative ideas.

Equally, booksellers and librarians must be free to present the full range of works, across the ideological spectrum, to all. They should not have that freedom constrained by governments or local authorities, individuals or groups seeking to impose their own standards or tastes upon the community at large, even when this is done in the name of the 'community' or of its majority.

For booksellers and librarians to present the broadest range of written works, there must be the **freedom to publish**. Publishers must be free to publish those works which they believe important, including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or might even be considered offensive by some in particular groups.

It is the responsibility and mission of publishers, booksellers and librarians, through their professional judgement, to give full meaning to the freedom to read by providing everyone with access to authors' works. Publishers,

librarians, and booksellers do not necessarily endorse every work they make available. While individual publishers and booksellers make their own editorial decisions and selections, access to writings should not be limited on the basis of the personal history or political affiliations of the author.

The risk of self-censorship due to social, political or economic pressures remains high, affecting every part of the chain from writer to reader. Society must create the environment for authors, publishers, booksellers and librarians to fulfil their missions freely.

We therefore call on governments and all other stakeholders to help protect, uphold and promote the three above freedoms – of expression, and to publish and read – in law and in practice.

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