

Dear colleagues,

The Russian PEN Center would like to welcome the Ukrainian PEN Center in Kyiv. Everyone who has joined this global association of authors, while each a citizen of his or her own country, simultaneously belongs to the global cultural community. We are aware that culture always trumps politics and transcends national borders. We support our Ukrainian colleagues in their desire to maintain their unique Ukrainian culture. Similarly, we would like to be engaged in an artistic and creative dialogue, rather than being in the midst of a confrontation driven by political and geopolitical considerations.

We see the Russian government's policy of aggression toward Ukraine as inexcusable and intolerable. This is something we have repeatedly stated over the last few months.

Please accept our apologies. We hope that the logic of history itself will put everything into perspective and context. We only wish for it to happen soon rather than in the distant future.

It is quite difficult to get an objective picture of the current developments, and independent Russian reporters are doing everything they can to communicate information to the Russian public that is free from distortion. Both Russia and Ukraine are going through challenging times, and we see our mandate as both making sense, as the artists that we are, of what is going on in addition to searching for mutual understanding and building a new relationship. This relationship should be built, not on the patronizing pattern of 'older' and 'younger' brothers that has been utilized since the days of the empire, but on cultural equality and respect.

Signed on behalf of the Russian PEN Center by: M. Vishnevetskaya, I. Irteniev, K. Kedrov, L. Rubinstein, L. Simonov, O. Summ, L. Timofeev, L. Ulitskaya