



© Ashraf Fayadh, via Instagram

Life and Freedom for Ashraf Fayadh

Worldwide Reading on 14th January, 2016

Events in:

Austria Freirad Freies Radio Innsbruck; BUNDESPUNKT and Shakespeare & Company booksellers, Vienna | **Bolivia** PEN Bolivia, Santa Cruz | **Bosnia and Herzegovina** PEN Bosnia Herzegovina, Sarajevo | **Bulgaria** MENAR Film Festival, Sofia | **Canada** ADAB Canada, Auteurs de la Diaspora Arabe et Berbère au Canada and BEROAF Editions, Montreal | **Croatia** Croatian PEN, Writers Society and Booksa Lit. Club, Zagreb | **Denmark** Danish PEN, Copenhagen | **Egypt** Cairo Literature Festival, Cairo | **France** Maison des écrivains et de la littérature, Paris; Bahiyyih Nakhjavani, Strasbourg | **Germany** Agora – Gesellschaft für Literatur, Kunst und Kultur e.V., Bad Oeynhausen; internationales literaturfestival berlin and HAU Hebbel am Ufer, Berlin; Lenau-Grundschule, Berlin; Ibn Rushd Fund and Lettrétage, Berlin; Europäisches Gymnasium Bertha von Suttner, Berlin; Schliemann-Grammar School, Berlin; indieberlin; Willy Brandt Schule, Berlin; Amnesty International, Bremen; Literaturhaus Villa Augustin, Dresden; YOP year of performance, Rotraut de Neve, Hamburg; Writers' Room Hamburg and Filmraum Hamburg; Marktkirche Hannover; International School Hannover Region; Deutsches Literaturinstitut Leipzig; Verband der Freien Lektorinnen und Lektoren e. V., VFLL, 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** Journal la macchina sognante and Poetry group multiVERSI, Bologna; UAAR, Union of Rationalist Atheists and Agnostics and Amnesty International, La Spezia; Q Code Mag, Milano; University of Napoli L'Orientale, Napoli; Griot Bookshop and editoriaraba, Rome; UAAR and Amnesty International, Rome; Associazione 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** Ledikasyon 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 Sina Meredith, Auckland | **Nicaragua** PEN Nicaragua, Managua | **Nigeria** PEN Nigeria, Obafemi Awolowo University Ife; 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, Sakharov Center, Moscow | **Serbia** Cultural Center Grad, Belgrade | **Singapore** MEI and Yale-NUS College, Singapore | **Spain** Basque PEN, Bilbo | **Sweden** Swedish PEN, Göteborg Litteraturhus; Swedish PEN, Kulturhuset Stadsteatern Stockholm | **Switzerland** Literaturhaus Basel; 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 Cymru, Cardiff | **Ukraine** Book Maestro Club, Cherkasy; 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 Writing Program, University of Iowa; Emily Farranto, Andy Young, and Khaled Hegazzi, New Orleans; Rattapallax, 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

Appeal for a worldwide reading on 14th January, 2016

The international literature festival Berlin (ilb) calls on all individuals, institutions, schools and media outlets that 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 curator, who lives in Saudi Arabia, 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 outspoken and daring."

Besides renouncing Islam, Fayadh also stands accused of blaspheming and promoting atheism through his collection of poetry, Instructions Within, published in 2008. Fayadh has asserted that the poems are "just about me being [a] Palestinian refugee ... about cultural and philosophical issues. But the religious extremists explained it as destructive ideas against God."

The charges, coupled with the lack of due legal process, show that it is not Fayadh who is guilty but rather Saudi Arabia that is once again guilty of disregarding human rights and the rule of law. In various surveys the kingdom continually 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 a symbol for all the victims of a deeply repressive regime that is supported 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 2013 thanks to secret vote-trading deals conducted with the UK, as revealed by Wikileaks. Other Western countries keep weapons and legitimacy streaming towards Saudi Arabia in order to keep oil flowing towards themselves. Caught in the current are ordinary people like Ashraf Fayadh, whose rights go unheeded in the kingdom and abroad.

Amidst all the recent outrage expressed by Western leaders against IS, in the rhetoric of war and threats of retribution, there has not been a word about Saudi Arabia's role in helping to promulgate the virulent form of Islam practiced by IS. There is no doubt about the overlaps in their ideology both certainly endorse lashing or beheading (on the latter front Saudi Arabia actually outdid IS in the last year) anyone who does not share their views.

With this worldwide reading, we demand that the UK and US governments intervene on behalf of Ashraf Fayadh as a first step towards pressuring Saudi Arabia to raise its human rights standards.

We further demand that the United Nations suspend Saudi Arabia from the Human Rights Council until its abysmal record on upholding civil liberties improves.

We also call on Western governments, especially in the UK and the US, to acknowledge the problems inherent in maintaining cozy, unquestioning relations with a country renowned for systematic human rights abuses.

Please contact the ilb if you would like to participate.
worldwiderreading@literaturfestival.com

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