

PEN Statement on Death Threat to Salman Rushdie

PEN International is appalled to learn that the author Salman Rushdie has once again been the subject of a death threat; we condemn this criminal attempt to silence an international exponent of free speech.

Rushdie was warned of the threat to his life shortly before he was due to attend the Jaipur Literary Festival, Asia's largest event of its kind. The author had intended to discuss one of his earlier novels, the Booker-prize winning *Midnight's Children*. The threat caused Rushdie to withdraw from the festival.

A brief statement was issued by the writer explaining that he had been warned by intelligence sources that members of Mumbai's criminal underworld had put a price on his head. He said that he was unwilling to risk appearing at the festival, where there would be some risk to his family and other festival attendees.

Rushdie was the victim of an infamous attack on free speech over the publication of his book *The Satanic Verses* (1988), when the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini issued a fatwa calling for Rushdie's death, forcing him to remain in hiding for many years.

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