



Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing

Witness Biographies

Imprisoned Writers

Panelists

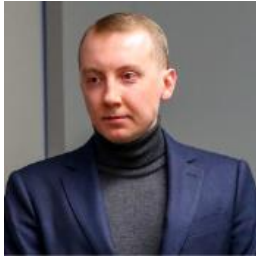


Aatish Taseer is a writer and journalist. He is the author of the memoir *Stranger to History: A Son's Journey Through Islamic Lands* and the acclaimed novels *The Way Things Were*, a finalist for the 2016 Jan Michalski Prize; *The Temple-Goers*, which was short-listed for the Costa First Novel Award; and *Noon*. His work has been translated into more than a dozen languages. He is a contributing writer for The International New York Times and has written for Time, The Wall Street Journal, Prospect, The Sunday Times, The Sunday Telegraph, Financial Times, TAR, and Esquire, among other publications. In 2019, Taseer's Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) status was revoked, likely in retaliation for his TIME magazine cover story about Prime Minister Narendra Modi headlined "India's Divider in Chief." Since the Indian government has revoked his OCI status and also denied him a visa, Taseer has been exiled from his birthplace, where his immediate family members reside.



Tsitsi Dangarembga is a Zimbabwean novelist, playwright, and filmmaker. The author of three books, her 2020 novel *This Mournable Body* was shortlisted for the Booker Prize and her debut *Nervous Conditions* won the African Commonwealth Writers' Prize. She has been awarded the PEN Award for Free Expression, the PEN Pinter Prize, the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade, and the Donald Windham-Sandy M. Campbell Literature Prize. Founding director of the Institute of Creative Arts for Progress in Africa Trust, she is currently a Radcliffe Fellow at the Harvard Radcliffe Institute. Dangarembga was arrested on July 31, 2020 for taking part in protests organized in response to corruption and President Emmerson Mnangagwa's leadership, existing issues exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. She was released on bail the next day but, for the last two years, has been forced to comply with the onerous requirements of criminal trial on retaliatory charges of "incitement to commit violence" and "breaching COVID-19 regulations." Dangarembga appeared for hearings more than 25 times after her arrest to contest the spurious charges. On September 29, 2022, she was convicted of inciting public violence, fined \$70,000 Zimbabwean dollars, and given

a suspended sentence. She is subject to six months of imprisonment should she “reoffend” within the next five years.



Stansilav Aseyev is a novelist, poet, journalist, and playwright. Born in Donetsk, Ukraine, he has worked as a journalist there since the separatist takeover in 2014, reporting for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty’s project “Donbas.Realii.” From 2015 to 2017, he worked in the separatist-controlled Donbas as a correspondent for the newspapers *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia* and *Ukrainska Pravda*, Radio Liberty, the weekly magazine *Tyzhden*, and the independent eastern Ukrainian news agency *OstroV*. Aseyev wrote about daily life in the Donbas on his Facebook blog, using the pen name Vasin to escape potential prosecution associated with writing for independent media outlets. Aseyev also describes the war in the Donbas in his novel, *The Melchior Elephant or A man who thought*, which was first published in Moscow in *Yunost* magazine (#1 — #6, 2015), and then in the Kayala Publishing House in Kyiv. Aseyev was kidnapped by the self-proclaimed Donetsk People’s Republic (DPR), local separatists supported by the Russian government, on June 2, 2017 in Donetsk. In August 2018, he was forced to film a “confession” to the spurious allegation of spying, which was aired on the Russian state TV channel Rossiya 24. On December 29, 2019, Aseyev was freed after two-and-a-half years held in a prison camp as part of a broad prisoner exchange between the Ukrainian government and the separatist group.

Moderator



Nadine Farid Johnson serves as the Managing Director of PEN America Washington and Free Expression Programs, where she leads the organization’s high-level governmental engagement on a broad range of global and domestic free expression issues. She is an attorney and advocate with a longtime focus in democracy, human rights, and governance who spent nearly a decade as a U.S. diplomat. She has a breadth of experience across sectors, having also served as executive director of the ACLU of Kansas and as operations and engagement lead at Google. Previously, she was a professor of law and political science at Gonzaga University and a Climenko Fellow at Harvard Law School. She has been featured in U.S. and global media including *World Politics Review*, *The Hill*, *The Daily Beast*, *CNN International*, *NPR*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. She is a graduate of DePauw University and Tulane Law School and studied at the U.S. Naval War College.