

**Presentation of the “2008 IPA Freedom to Publish Prize” to publisher Ragıp Zarakolu – Thursday, 18 September 2008
Portuguese Synagogue, Amsterdam, 20:00
Opening of Threats to the Open Book (International Symposium on Neo-Censorship)
Amsterdam World Book Capital 2008**

Speech by Anna Maria Cabanellas, IPA President

The board of the International Publishers Association (IPA) meeting in Seoul, Korea, in May 2008, selected publisher Ragıp Zarakolu as Prize-winner of the 2008 IPA Freedom to Publish Prize from among many highly commendable candidates.

The IPA Freedom to Publish Prize honours each year a person or an organisation that has made an important contribution to the defence and promotion of freedom to publish anywhere in the world.

Amsterdam is World Book Capital this year, and IPA is a proud partner of this great international endeavour. As we are all very aware of, Amsterdam has always been a stronghold of freedom of expression and of religion since the times of Descartes and Spinoza. This very place, the Portuguese synagogue, stands as a great symbol of Amsterdam’s deeply-rooted tolerance. It is therefore only natural to formally present the 2008 IPA Freedom to Publish Prize here in Amsterdam at the opening ceremony of the International Symposium on Neo-Censorship entitled: *Threats to the Open Book*.

I would like to take this opportunity to particularly thank IPA’s Vice-President, your fellow country man Herman P. Spruijt, for all he has done to ensure this event meets success. My gratitude also goes to another publisher, tonight’s keynote speaker, William Nygaard from Norway. I would like to underline his courage and his wholehearted support to freedom to publish. I would also like to thank the Dutch Publishing community, in particular our old friend Robbert Vrij and our Dutch member, the Dutch Publishers Association (NUV-GAU), which generously sponsors the Prize this year, making this event possible. My thanks also go to the team of Amsterdam World Book Capital, in particular chairwoman Judith Belifante, director Lidy Klein Gunnewiek and program coordinator Willemijn Lamp who has been incredibly helpful. I am also grateful to our World Book Capital partners for being here tonight, namely UNESCO, the International Booksellers Federation (IBF) and the librarians of IFLA. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to Amsterdam’s mayor, Mr Job Cohen, for being with us and for hosting the ceremony tonight in cooperation with Amsterdam World Book Capital.

Threats to the Open Book, the two-day seminar tonight’s ceremony is officially launching, will explore the new forms of censorship. I am both proud and happy that publishers like Shahla Lahiji or Bjørn Smith-Simonsen, the Chair of IPA’s Freedom to Publish Committee, will contribute to this important topic. As IPA President, I would nevertheless like to take this opportunity to stress that while new forms of censorship have certainly emerged, they keep co-existing with more traditional forms of censorship. This is particularly true in a country like Turkey where the blocking of “you tube” coexists with the prosecution of writers and publishers.

Publisher Ragıp Zarakolu was condemned for the crime of « insulting Turkishness » under Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code on 17 June 2008 for having published a book entitled: *The Truth will set us free. Armenians and Turks reconciled* by George Jerjian. This was the first conviction since this Article 301 was slightly amended on 30 April 2008. Over 1,000 people, including writers, publishers and journalists, have been brought to the courts under Article 301 since it was created in 2005. Around 30 publishers, writers and journalists are on trial today under Article 301. They are among a total of 79 charged under a range of laws that impinge on the right to free speech, which shows that Article 301, although being a symbol, is not the only tool used to prosecute free speech in Turkey.

Ragıp Zarakolu has made it clear that he will appeal the sentence and is determined to go as far as the European Court of Human Rights if need be. IPA supports him in demanding that he be acquitted in appeal. We thus urge the Turkish Judiciary to complete this trial swiftly, efficiently, quickly and fairly. We also urge you to join us in demanding that he is acquitted in appeal by sending appeals to the relevant Turkish authorities.

IPA has been calling for the repeal of Article 301 ever since it was presented in draft form, and was therefore deeply disappointed that rather than remove this legislation, the amendments were cosmetic. Under the amended Article 301, it is illegal to insult the “Turkish nation” (instead of “Turkishness” previously), and charges can only be brought by the Minister for Justice. Since Article 301’s revision, the Minister of Justice, Mr Mehmet Ali Şahin, has reportedly authorised 36 cases under Article 301, including recently, to give just one example, that of writer Temel Demirer. Strikingly, another 98 files are still pending for potential approval on the Minister’s desk.

Ragıp Zarakolu is being singled out by the conservative elements of the judiciary because of his decades of struggle for freedom of expression, and particularly his promotion of minority rights and his quest for truth and justice.

Ragıp Zarakolu's work as a publisher and his wholehearted support of freedom to publish have often brought him into conflict with the authorities and endangered his personal safety. His publishing house Belge, which he founded with his late wife Ayşe Nur in 1977, was fire bombed in the mid 1990s. Despite the string of attacks, he has persistently continued to tackle contentious issues, thus encouraging healthy debate and democratization in Turkey.

Given the profile of Belge publishing, it is therefore no surprise that it has been put under strong financial pressure by the prosecution of its owner. Throughout his life, Ragıp Zarakolu has been subjected to a series of long, time-consuming and expensive court hearings for shedding light on controversial issues. A publisher in the courts is a publisher who spends time and money away from his business. Like a terrible disease, such procedures can drain time and energy. The court case in itself becomes the punishment for the publisher.

The conduct of his last trial, in itself, did take the form of harassment and punishment for having dared to produce a work, which touches Turkey’s major taboo subject, the Armenian genocide. In IPA’s view, it is not the task of governments to stifle debate.

On the contrary, governments should seek to ensure that open debates, in particular about controversial issues such as the latter can actually take place in a non-violent form. Freedom of expression and freedom to publish are inextricably linked. They are fundamental conditions for any democracy. These freedoms are prerequisites for an informed exchange of information, views and values among citizens. In particular, States should refrain from prosecuting writers and publishers who have expressed non-violent opinions as penal prosecution of these writers and publishers may turn them into potential targets in the eyes of the most nationalistic circles. It is the State's duty to protect them, not to make targets of them.

It may sound *cliché* but Turkey truly is at a crossroads, in particular on the freedom of expression and freedom to publish fronts. While the conditions for freedom of expression have significantly improved since the EU harmonization process started in the mid-1990s, they have worsened again since early last year with the coward murders of Hrant Dink in January 2007, and of three employees of the Zirve publishing house in the eastern town of Malatya in April 2007.

In giving publisher Ragıp Zarakolu the 2008 IPA Freedom to Publish Prize, we remind the Turkish authorities that Turkish legislation must be amended or repealed to meet international standards, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. This legislation in need of reform or simple repeal includes: New Article 301, which, despite being revised this spring, is, as we have seen, still used by the Ministry of Justice to prosecute free speech, Law 5816 protecting Atatürk's memory from insult, Article 318 of the Penal Code that has led numerous commentators on conscientious objection to the courts, or the raft of articles under Anti Terror legislation and against "incitement" that have been used against writers and publishers on the Kurdish issue, etc.

In giving publisher Ragıp Zarakolu the 2008 IPA Freedom to Publish Prize, we rise to honour the integrity, the steadfastness and the courage that he so marvellously demonstrates.

In giving publisher Ragıp Zarakolu the 2008 IPA Freedom to Publish Prize, we rise in deep respect to celebrate his humanity, his passion, his love of different cultures and his quest for truth and reconciliation.

Thank you Ragıp.