

May 30, 2015

Dear Rachel, Emma, and Sean,

I am writing to express my appreciation for including me in the Transportation Press's next project. It's good to be on board and to collaborate on such major undertaking that is dear to me and very close to my heart—the Iran Issue.

First step, to write a letter in 500 words or less. Easy, isn't it? Maybe not! How is it possible to write all that I want to say in that many words?

Words we breathe, and in them we live. When I think of words I see letters floating in the air, connecting here and there magically creating new ideas. I have this conviction—and I'm sure you agree with me—that words are powerful. Words can harm and injure to the point of no return. They can inspire, give wings and allow people to fly. Why not using them to connect?

I write because I have stories to tell, because all these colorful words jump up and down in my head, bounce back and forth in the confine of my body, mind, spirit, forcing each other to jump out into the open. Sometimes I feel handicapped in expressing myself vocally, and while I am aware and very conscious of limitations of language, I yield to writing. At least it gives me wings and it takes me to where I physically cannot go. Confessing here now, it saves me from myself.

I'm yet to meet you, but I know for the fact that you express yourself in words too. I know that you strive to be better in life, provide for your family, and make a better and more peaceful world—like any other writer, like any other decent human being. But when I put the tip of the pen to the paper—and yes, I sometimes write the old fashioned way—I am reminded of many colleagues—known and unknown—who are rotting in jail only because they have chosen to use words to fight back theocracy, censorship, injustice. I am burdened with the memory of many precious lives slipping away in prisons of Iran. And I find myself obligated to use this medium to be their voice; if not, to write in their memories, in their names. I write to honor my colleagues, to acknowledge the sacrifices they have made, and to continue on their footsteps. Now that they are denied the right to write, all I can do is to pick up the pen and keep writing. It doesn't need to be political, although it can be. It doesn't need to carry a significant message, although it may. All I have to do is to write, so that they know that outside of the confines of their prison cells, other writers continue on their path.

Any opportunity for an Iranian writer to write is an opportunity for all Iranian writers; any venue for an Iranian writer to publish is a venue for all Iranian writers. That's why I appreciate you and the opportunity you have granted my colleagues and I.

Let us have this dialogue. Let us talk. Let us write our heart out.

In writing,  
Shirindokht

*About the writer:*

Shirin is a scholar of poetry and prose, a creative writer, and artist and a translator, proficient in English and Persian. She has published two compilations of short stories in Persian and is currently working on a novel.

She is a lecturer at San Jose University and Northwestern Polytechnic in California. She was the last director of the Associate of Iranian American writers and is one of three jurists for the No to Censorship Contest by Siamak Pourzand Foundation. She is also pursuing a PhD in transpersonal psychology.

