

FIND YOUR READERS!



ICORN

INTERNATIONAL CITIES OF REFUGE NETWORK

MANUAL

Each time a new writer arrives in Norway, many of the same questions arise: How do we get their texts translated? Who should translate them? How much does the translation cost, and who should pay for it? How can we get the texts published? Who should we contact? All these questions point towards one thing: how to find the way to the readers. This handbook is made to help you achieve that.

10 tips summarise what you, as a writer, ought to think about when trying to reach your readers in Norway. These points give you and your coordinator a quick introduction to the practicalities of translation and publishing in Norway. You also get tips on priorities and choices you can make to increase your chances of being published.

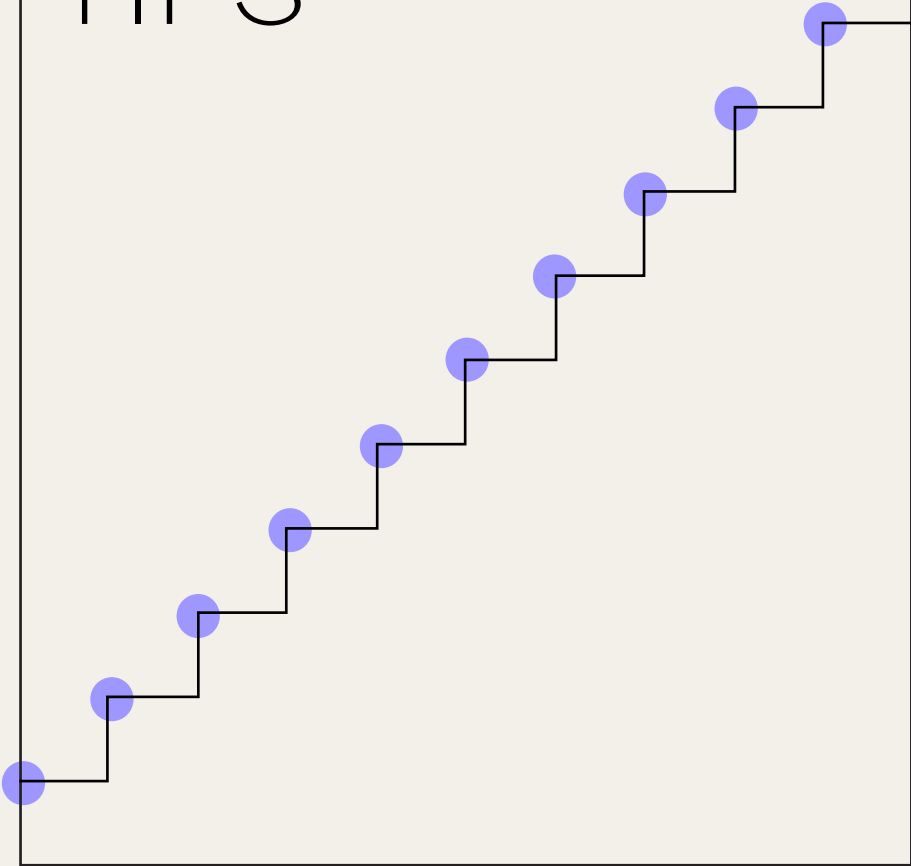
Interviews with two ICORN writers who have been published – one in Norway and one in Sweden – give concrete examples of what might work. Their stories will hopefully serve as information and inspiration.

The handbook is best utilised in combination with **The Translator Database** ICORN has compiled and is complemented by ***The Norwegian Literary System: A Miniguide.***

This handbook is written by **Johanne Fronth-Nygren.**

10

TIPS



10 TIPS

1 — YOU ARE NOT IN A HURRY

Publishing a book in Norway is a long process, and you are new in the country. Firstly, take your time getting to know your new city and your new life. Start learning Norwegian as soon as you can. Get to know your coordinator, the ICORN network, and your local library. These people can tell you more about Norwegian literature and how books are published in Norway. This handbook will also help you with this. Remember that the most important thing is not to publish books as quickly as possible, but in the best possible way.

2 — FIGURE OUT WHAT MATTERS MOST TO YOU AS A WRITER

Think this through before you do anything else. This will make it easier to choose which texts you should translate and where you should try to publish them. What do you want to achieve with your texts? Who do you want to read what you've written? What's your greatest strength as a writer? What kind of texts do you want to work on now that you're in Norway? You might want to write down your thoughts about this and discuss them with your coordinator or someone else you trust.

3 — DON'T TRANSLATE EVERYTHING AT ONCE

Translation costs money. You and your coordinator should talk about how much money you have at your disposal and how to best utilise it. Spending money translating a whole book is a waste. The publishers only need an excerpt in order to judge the quality of your writing. If you are accepted by a publisher, they are the ones who will pay for the rest of the translation, not you or your city.

Select five to ten poems, a short story, an essay, or one to two chapters from a book you want to translate. This should be the *very* best you have written and what you, *most* of all, want to have published. Find texts you wrote before coming to Norway and read them again – maybe with a new eye. Or write new texts and let them mature long enough, so you can read them as if they were written by someone else. Get someone you trust to read your texts and help you choose which ones you should translate.

4 — USE A PROFESSIONAL TRANSLATOR

A translation is the first meeting between you and your readers in another language. A poor translation creates a poor first impression and can spoil your chances of being published. A good translation will make your text, at least, as good as it is in your mother tongue.

- 4 — Translation is a craft which requires an in-depth understanding of both the language and the culture from which the text is being translated and which the text is being translated into. In the case of literary translation, knowledge of literature and high artistic precision are also required. If you write poetry, the translator should preferably be a poet or at least have worked with poetry before. You can also have your poems roughly translated into Norwegian by a translator who works with prose, and afterwards, get a Norwegian poet to rework them, so they read as good poems in Norwegian.

Don't use friends and acquaintances as translators; use professionals. You can find translators from most relevant languages in ICORN's database. You will also find a list of literary translators in Norway on the homepage of the Norwegian Association of Literary Translators (NO). On the homepage of The Norwegian Non-Fiction Writers and Translators Association (NFFO), you can find a list of those who translate non-fiction (see Useful Links). Don't use translation agencies. Translators who work there often have little experience with literary texts, are not organised in unions and are not paid decently.

- 4 — If possible, avoid translations via another language (secondary translations). Misunderstandings are likely to occur, and the translation will be twice as expensive. It's preferable to get your text translated directly from the original into Norwegian. However, if it proves impossible to find a suitable Norwegian translator, you can use a professional translator who translates into English or any of the other Scandinavian languages (check the database). Once your text exists in one of these languages, it is easy to find good translators who can transfer it into Norwegian. This solution might be especially useful if you write poetry and need a Norwegian translator with competence in poetry – good translators of poetry might not be proficient in your language.

Sign a contract with your translator and pay them the applicable standard fee. Current rates can be found on the website of the Norwegian Association of Literary Translators and The Norwegian Non-Fiction Writers and Translators Association (see Useful Links). A translation is intellectual property and belongs to the translator – it is she/he who makes it possible to read your text in a new language. Remember that the name of the translator should always follow the translation and always be mentioned if you or someone else reads your text in public. You should also ask for the translator's permission before the Norwegian version is published. The publisher will then have to pay the translator the appropriate fee.

5 — THINK ABOUT HOW AND WHERE YOU WANT TO BE PUBLISHED

Find out what kind of books the different publishing houses publish, and which of them might suit your writing best. There are many publishers in Norway, big and small, who publish many different types of books. The majority of them are based in Oslo, but there are also many smaller publishers in other parts of the country. Maybe one close to where you live? You can use the list of publishing houses on the website of The Norwegian Publishers Association to find out more (see Useful Links).

Publishing a book is not the only way to reach your readers. Many writers in Norway also publish their texts in newspapers, magazines, and journals in print and online. You can reach just as many or more readers in this way. There are many different magazines and newspapers in Norway that might be interested in your texts. Which publications can suit your writing? Check the list on the website of The Norwegian Association for Journals and Magazines (see Useful Links). Magazines, festivals, and other organisations can apply to The Norwegian Arts Council for grants towards translation of short texts and excerpts. In this way, you might not have to spend money on these translations.

- 5 — Consider submitting shorter pieces to local or national newspapers. You can reach a lot of readers through these. In Useful Links, you will find a website with a list of all newspapers in Norway.

Also, think about the possibilities of being translated into languages other than Norwegian and being published abroad. Norwegian is the language of the country you now live in, but you can reach a lot more readers if translated into one of the major world languages. (The database has, for example, many excellent translators who translate into English.) A good English translation will give you a better position than a poor Norwegian translation, even when Norwegian publishers and magazines assess your texts; they all read English.

6 — **WRITE A DESCRIPTION OF YOUR BOOK/ PROJECT AND YOUR LITERARY WORK**

If you have written a whole book that you want to publish or are working on a larger writing project, it is useful to make a proper description of your project. It should contain your CV with a list of what you have published, and a short synopsis (max 20 lines) which summarises the characteristics of the book (genre, themes, plot if applicable, tone, and style).

- 6 — If you are working on a larger piece of prose (novel, short story collection or non-fiction), you can also benefit from writing a summary of the content (plot lines, an overview of the chapters/short stories, character development) that totals max two pages. You can enclose this package of information with your sample translation when you contact the publishing houses. This will give the editors a better idea of your work. As a writer, you might also find it a useful way to get a better overview of your own writing. If possible, get someone with knowledge of the Norwegian literary field to read through your description and give you feedback on it.

7 — EXPECT TO BE EDITED

Being accepted by a Norwegian publishing house doesn't mean your book will be printed at once, or in the version that you initially sent the publisher. In Norway, all writers published by professional publishing houses receive editorial support. This means that editors and literary consultants (qualified freelancers who read manuscripts for the publishers) help the writers make their books even better. They will give you thorough readings, point to things that are unclear or not fully developed, and suggest changes you can consider. This could be weaknesses in plot or structure, unconvincing characters, unnecessary repetitions or clichés, superfluous

- 7 — words or paragraphs, a lack of textual dynamic, or a style or tone that needs polishing.

Some find it challenging to receive such feedback on their own texts, especially in the beginning. It can feel like unwanted criticism or like it's not solely your text anymore. But remember that the publishing house is investing a lot of work in you and your book because they believe in you.

Editorial treatment usually means that you submit several drafts of your book to the editor over a period of time. The process from your first submission until the book is printed typically takes one to two years. This can seem like a long time, but the process gives your book a better chance of living a long life once it's printed!

8 — **DON'T SELF-PUBLISH**

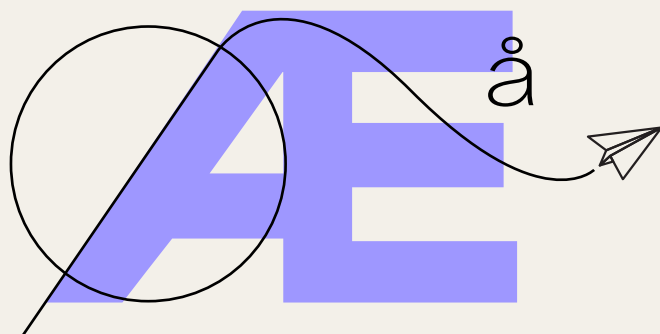
Self-publishing is common in many countries. In Norway, this is still a last resort for writers who have been rejected by professional publishing houses. If you self-publish your books, you won't receive the editorial treatment, distribution, and marketing a professional publisher gives you. You will also have to pay for all the production costs yourself. Neither will self-published books count towards membership applications to, for example,

- 8 — The Norwegian Authors' Union or applications for grants from The Arts Council.

Try instead sending your manuscript to several publishers separately. If you are rejected by them all, there are often reasons for this. If you haven't already done so, ask people whose literary judgement you trust to read your manuscript and suggest improvements. Try to work more on the project or start a new one. The point is not to publish a book as quickly as possible, but to make sure it is as good as possible - and that it will be read.

9 — **BE REALISTIC**

The Norwegian literary field is competitive. There are several writing schools in Norway, and many people want to become authors. Most people who get their book published have been writing literature for many years and have had manuscripts rejected before. There are grants for writers, but they are relatively few. Most Norwegian writers have a day job in addition to their writing. And yet, Norway is a country with a good support system for writers, and with patience and hard work, it is possible to carve out a way of life with room for writing.



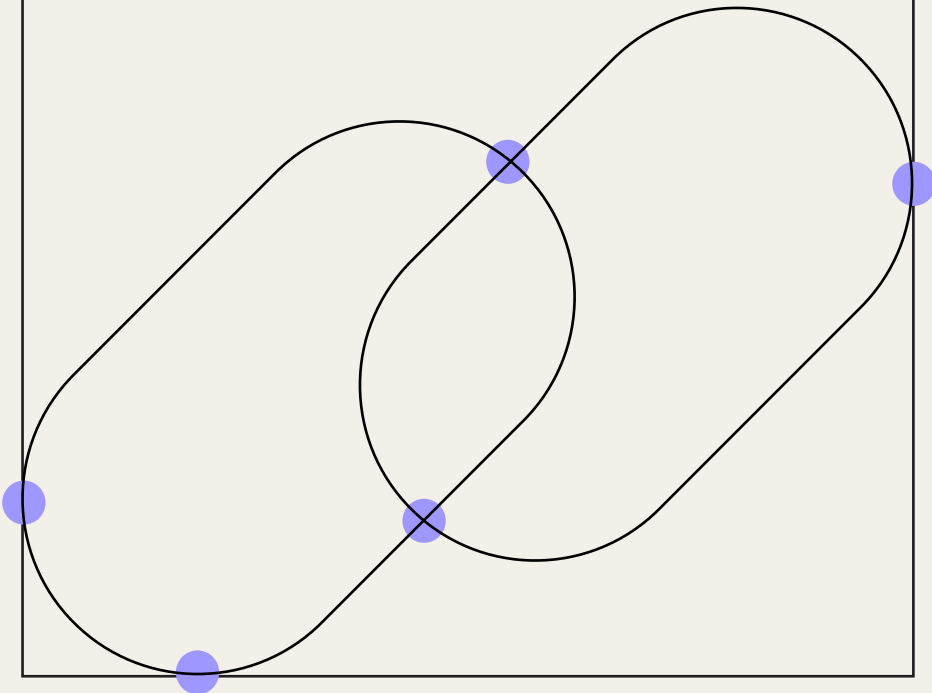
10— LEARN NORWEGIAN AND GET ORGANISED

Even if you have no plans of writing in Norwegian, it will help your work to know the language. This will make it possible for you to have direct contact with publishers and read Norwegian literature and newspapers. You can also take part in the translation of your work to make it even better. Not least, you can communicate with Norwegian colleagues and more easily become a part of the country's public conversations.

If you are qualified for it, apply for membership in all the Norwegian writers' associations which are relevant to you (see Useful Links). A membership in any of these organisations will give you benefits. You will have a better chance of and be eligible for more grants; you will meet colleagues and build a professional network; you can get help getting to know the Norwegian literary system and receive discounts on books and tickets to cultural events.

USEFUL

LINKS



USEFUL LINKS

NORWEGIAN ASSOCIATION OF LITERARY TRANSLATORS (NO)

Organises literary translators who translate into or from Norwegian. The association has strict entrance requirements, and a membership here guarantees a good and professional translator. NO's website is searchable for translators from a wide array of languages. The standard contract with current rates, which applies to all translations of fiction and non-fiction, can be found under the heading «Avtaler og skatteforhold». oversetterforeningen.no

VISIT

THE NORWEGIAN NON-FICTION WRITERS AND TRANSLATORS ASSOCIATION (NFFO)

Organises writers and translators of non-fiction for adults and children. Membership is based on texts that have been published by professional publishing houses and magazines and have been through editorial checks. On their website, you will find a lot of useful information for non-fiction writers, e.g. about grants. You can also search for translators (although sadly, few translate from non-European languages). nffo.no

VISIT

NORWEGIAN AUTHORS' UNION (DNF)

Organises writers of fiction – novelists, poets, and short story writers. Entrance requirement: minimum two professional publications subjected to peer review.

forfatterforeningen.no

VISIT

NORWEGIAN SOCIETY OF AUTHORS (FORFATTERFORBUNDET)

Organises writers of all genres of fiction. Entrance requirements: minimum one publication (also self-published books), no peer review. forfatterforbundet.no

VISIT

NORWEGIAN WRITERS FOR CHILDREN (NBU)

Organises writers of fiction for children and young adults. Entrance requirements: minimum two professional publications subjected to peer review. nbuforfattere.no

VISIT

WRITERS' GUILD OF NORWAY (NDF)

Organises playwrights, screenwriters, and scriptwriters within tv, radio and computer games. Entrance requirements: minimum one performance of a full-length piece or several shorter pieces for the stage, screen, tv, radio or computer games. Subject to peer review. dramatiker.no

VISIT

THE NORWEGIAN UNION OF JOURNALISTS (NJ)

Organises all editorial professionals – both employees and freelancers – who work in journalism: reporters, photographers, hosts, developers, editors, analysts, designers, illustrators, and managers within newspapers, TV, radio and online magazines. nj.no

VISIT

THE NORWEGIAN PUBLISHERS' ASSOCIATION

Organisation for Norwegian publishers who are committed to professional publishing standards and standard contracts for fees and royalties. You can find a list of all their members on their website. forleggerforeningen.no

VISIT

THE NORWEGIAN ASSOCIATION FOR JOURNALS AND MAGAZINES (NORSK TIDSSKRIFTFORENING)

Organisation for Norwegian journals and magazines. On their website, you can find a list of all their members.

tidsskriftforeningen.no/medlemmer

VISIT

NORWEGIAN NEWSPAPERS

Website with a list of all the newspapers in Norway.

norske-aviser.com

VISIT

NORWEGIAN WRITERS' CENTRE (NORSK FORFATTERSENTRUM)

Organisation for writers. Facilitates readings and talks at festivals, schools, libraries, and similar venues, and ensures writers get decently paid for such jobs. The organisation has offices in Kristiansand, Bergen, Oslo, Trondheim and Tromsø.

Entrance requirements: minimum one literary publication.

forfattersentrum.no

VISIT

DIKTKAMMERET.NO

An open forum for poetry where everyone can submit their poems for discussion and feedback. The Norwegian poet Helge Torvund comments on selected poems, and each month one of the entries is pronounced as the winner and printed in the newspaper Klassekampen's literary supplement. A good place to find out more about poetry in Norway and to test Norwegian translations of your poems.

diktammeret.no

VISIT

THE ARTS COUNCIL

Public body responsible for grants and support schemes for all artistic fields, including literature. Publishers and organisations can apply for grants to translate literary works which are written in minority languages but are to be published firstly in Norwegian by authors living in Norway. This also applies to bilingual books. Organisations and organisers can also apply for grants towards sample translations of literary works written in minority languages by authors living in Norway, who wish to present these samples to publishers, magazines, websites, or festivals and other literary events. kulturradet.no

VISIT

FRITT ORD

Private foundation which works to further freedom of expression, public debate, art, and culture. Supports projects within non-fiction, journalism, documentary filmmaking and photography, public debates, conferences, and seminars which encourage freedom of expression and critical thinking. The foundation is also open for applications for translations of minority language writers in Norway. frittord.no

VISIT

THE NORWEGIAN LITERARY SYSTEM:

A MINIGUIDE

More information about the Norwegian literary system and the various institutions and schemes can be downloaded and read here: TheNorwegianLiterarySystem

VISIT

Q&A

WITH FATEMEH
EKHTESARI

Photo: Linda Boummane Engelberth



Q&A WITH FATEMEH EKHTESARI

Poet, writer, and editor from Iran. ICORN writer in residence in Lillehammer 2017 – 2019.

What was your background as a writer before you came to Norway?

I started my writing career by blogging, writing for a radio program, and at the same time, writing poetry, short stories, and articles. I published my first collection of poems in 2008, which was heavily censored and then confiscated by court order before all the copies were destroyed and I was interrogated. My two next poetry collections were published in Iran in 2011 and 2014, both of which were accompanied by censorship, confiscation, and my arrest. In 2010, the literary journal of which I was the editor in chief was banned. After leaving Iran in 2015 and living in Turkey, I continued to write articles for Persian websites and also published a collection of short stories with H&S Media, an autobiographical novel with Tavana Publishing and a new poetry collection.

What has been and is the most important for you as a writer after you arrived in Norway?

After coming to Norway, the most important thing for me was to continue writing. Although I published two more

books in Persian after arriving in Norway (a collection of short stories and a long hypertext story), it was very important for me to be able to find my way into the Norwegian literary community. And this is only possible if you publish works in Norwegian.

Initially, some of my poems were translated at the Kapittel festival in Stavanger, some of them were published in the translation magazine *Mellom*, and I was able to participate in a number of literary festivals with works translated into Norwegian or English. Some of my poems were published in an anthology, *Å kysse en ørken, å kysse en myr* (Aschehoug 2019), and then a whole collection of my poems was translated into Norwegian. All of this has helped me enter a new literary space as a foreign writer.

What is important for me right now is to prove myself not as a foreign or immigrant writer in Norway and the international literary space, but as a writer, without any prefixes or suffixes.

How did you make contact with your Norwegian publisher(s)?

For the anthology, which included a number of my poems, it was the publishing house Aschehoug that contacted me. But for my personal poetry collection, my ICORN coordinator arranged for the poems to be translated by a professional translator and then sent the translation to a number of the larger

Norwegian publishing houses. When none of them accepted my book, the coordinator contacted a local publisher in my City of Refuge, Transfer Forlag, and set up a connection between us. For my third book, which I am still working on, the process has been somewhat different. The organisation *Leser søker bok* (LSB) asked me if I wanted to work with them on a bilingual book project, where I was to write new poems and have them translated and edited in workshops with an adviser from LSB, an editor and a translator.

How was/were your book(s) received in Norway?

I am an idealist, but I try not to be misled by that. Although I have published eight books in Persian, my poetry collection was my first book in Norway. I'm an immigrant who had lived in Norway for only three years when my book was published. Before that, only a few of my poems had been translated into Norwegian. In Iran, when I was publishing a book, I was bombarded with two completely different reactions. On the one hand, the audience who loved my book and rushed to the book fair to buy it. On the other, the security crackdown, the confiscation of books, and the destruction of my name in newspapers and magazines with the spreading of false news about the book and me. What I encountered in Norway was completely different. There was none of these two exaggerated and emotional reactions. Rather, the book slowly entered the market, it got several reviews in newspapers and on websites, it was recommended by other authors, and it was

introduced at the Lillehammer Literary Festival. Because of that, I was invited to several radio and podcast programs, and considering all of the above, I think it was well received. And now I have a certain Norwegian audience waiting for my next book.

How was the editing and translation process? Did it differ from the process in Iran?

The whole process of translation and editing was different from the publication of my books in Iran, and not just because all books there must be sent to the Ministry of Culture for censorship before they are allowed to be published. In Iran, we rarely see a collaboration between the author and the editor to improve the text. In Norway, on the other hand, the editor tries to create a bridge between the two languages. That is, when poems are to be translated from one language into a completely different one, the editor tries to match the poems with the target language and even the culture of the new country.

Did you rewrite or change anything in the books as they were translated?

Yes. In my opinion, the author should be flexible about the translation. I also believe poetry is untranslatable. It might seem contradictory, but what I think is an idealistic idea, and

what I do is more pragmatic. One shouldn't expect 100% of what exists in the original to be translated and transferred into the new language. I sometimes read translations of Rumi's poetry in English and try to compare it with the Persian version. The best translations of it are really two different worlds that arrive at the same meaning. But sometimes I like the English version more than the original, and I think it is more beautiful, although the translated version has no versification and lacks the rhythm of the original poem. Isn't that weird? I want to say that translations can be so good.

For my first poetry collection in Norwegian, I tried to choose poems that were less culturally specific and had fewer language games so they would sustain less damage in the translation process. But in the end, there were still terms, proverbs, and some metaphors and allusions in the poems which we decided to either change or simplify during translation. To add to the difficulty, Persian pronouns aren't gendered and are mostly hidden inside the verb. In the Norwegian translation, we had to specify a gender and write the pronoun separately, which reduced the semantic scope of the work. But without this clarification/simplification, the poems would've been incomprehensible in Norwegian.

If relevant: Do you think the books benefitted from having an editor – and why/why not?

Absolutely! The task of an editor is to try to transfer a text between the two languages in such a way that, in addition to preserving the meaning intended by the author, the work's

beauty and poeticism are also conveyed. I think translators sometimes are more concerned with conveying meaning as much as possible and to some extent preserving the form and appearance of the work. But an editor has to ask the questions: Are these lines or this form or this rhythm meaningful to the new audience? Can the audience relate to this work? If not, what methods should be used to get a better result? What can be done to make the translated work equally beautiful and poetic?

Do you have any advice for other ICORN writers who want to publish books in their new country?

My first piece of advice is: do not despair! I say this because I know how tedious and frustrating this process can be. Writing in a new country where you don't know the publishing rules and practices, finding a good translator, wondering whether the translation is good or not, looking for a publisher, trying to apply for the cost of this process, getting a negative response from organisations and publishers and translators, and ... all of this takes the energy out of a writer, a writer who thought she/he had come as a guest to the new country to just write and publish her/his work freely.

In addition, you may have been the best writer in your own country and been used to having the best publishers competing to publish your work, but this is not the case in the new country. And that can be annoying. But this will be the case as long as dictators rule the world and writers are forced to flee and seek refuge in another country to publish their works.

We must increase our tolerance.

My second piece of advice is: be patient. Especially if, like me, you come from a country like Iran where people are restless, and you enter a new country like Norway where everything goes, well, very slowly!

Q&A

WITH SUZANNE
IBRAHIM

Photo: Sandra Lee Petterson



Q&A WITH SUZANNE IBRAHIM

Poet, writer, and journalist from Syria. ICORN writer in residence in Östersund 2018 – 2020.

What was your background as a writer before you came to Sweden?

Before I came to Sweden, I had published seven books in Arabic in Syria – four books of poetry and three books of short stories – which means I was a well-established and well-known writer, as well as a journalist in Syria. I had participated in hundreds of cultural events, festivals, and activities in Syria and abroad. Many of my poems had been translated into French and were published in three books by Edilivre publishing in France.

How did you make contact with your Swedish publisher?

When I had my first reading and talk in Stockholm in 2018, I met the Swedish translator, editor, and poet Helena Fagerlund who was the moderator at the event. I told her that I had written a non-fiction book based on my diaries about the war in Syria. After a few months, she contacted my ICORN coordinator and told her that a publisher was interested in my book. At the book fair in Gothenburg in 2018, I had a meeting with

Anders Teglund, the owner of Teg publishing house, together with my coordinator and Helena Fagertun. Later Helena became the editor of this book, which was translated from Arabic into Swedish by Anna Jonsson.

How did you and your publisher work together to publish the book? How was the editing and translation process? Did it differ from the process in Syria?

After a short period, I sent the Arabic text to Anna, the translator, in order to start the translation process. Meanwhile, my coordinator applied for a grant from my local municipality of Östersund, as well as a grant from the National Arts Council (Kulturrådet) in Sweden. In February 2019, we, the publisher, the editor, the translator, my coordinator, the head of the local library, and I held a meeting in the library to discuss all the details relating to the publishing process and agreed on a timeline. We had received a total of 100,000 SEK in grants to publish the book. In September 2019, the book, ***När Vinden Exploderar Mot Min Hud***, was released during a very interesting event in Östersund, and later it was released during another interesting event in Stockholm. Throughout the whole process, I was in continuous contact with the translator and the editor. We were all interested in making the book as perfect as possible.

It's obvious that the process of publishing a book in Sweden is different from how I was used to doing it in Syria. There are two ways to publish a book in Syria: One is for the writer to

submit the book to the ministry of culture or to the writers' union. Here the book is subjected to approval and censoring by a special committee consisting of three readers, and they can refuse or accept or ask for many corrections due to unforeseen criteria, whether they are religious or political or traditional. The second way is to publish the book at the writer's own expense with some private publishing house or to publish the book in Lebanon. There are no editors in Syria; it is not a job there.

How was your book received in Sweden?

I would say that the book was well received by Swedish readers. Many articles were written about it, and many interviewed me as well. I took part in many events in Sweden and at the Frankfurt Bookfair to talk about my book. When I participated in Bokmässan Bodil, the regional bookfair in Östersund 2019, I was even able to sell many copies of my book. Jan Eliasson, former Swedish Foreign Minister and Deputy Secretary-General of the UN, wrote a few words for the back cover of my book as well.

The important point about the book is that most people in Sweden, and in the west in general, have no idea about the difficult religious and social situation in Syria. Reading my book, they got to know something about the daily life of ordinary people during the war in Syria.

What have you worked on after its publication?

I started directly after the book fair in Gothenburg in 2019 to write the second part of the book. The first part, *När Vinden Exploderar Mot Min Hud*, covered the war from 2011 to 2012, whilst the second part, which is not published yet, covers the years 2013 and 2014. Now I am looking for a publisher.

Do you have any advice for other ICORN writers who want to publish books in their new country?

I think it's important to build a good network in your own field, the cultural domain. Try to talk about your book anywhere so you may receive a call or meet someone who is interested. Try to do your best during the ICORN scholarship period because you have many people who will support you. I still think it's a challenge to publish a book in a different language and to address a different audience. This is the main obstacle in our new countries, I guess.



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