



# OPEN LETTER

PROTECTING TRANSLATORS AND INTERPRETERS WORLDWIDE



May 2019

H.E. Mr. António Guterres  
Secretary-General of the United Nations  
United Nations Headquarters  
New York, NY 10017



**Re: World Language Community and Its Human Rights Partners Seek  
a UN Resolution for the Protection of Civilian Translators/Interpreters  
in Conflict Situations**

Your Excellency,



It is with extreme interest and pleasure that we have observed your prioritization of multilingualism as a core value of the United Nations, both for internal and external operations. We were encouraged by your most recent report on Multilingualism (A/73/761) and commend you for spearheading this reform. Language is integral to the four pillars of your disarmament agenda, and translators and interpreters are critical to realizing much of this work.



In fact, the importance of linguists cannot be overstated. Yet in many armed conflict and post-conflict situations they remain a highly vulnerable population and are persecuted, imprisoned, abducted, tortured and murdered with impunity. That is why the undersigned – a coalition comprising the major international translator and interpreter associations, academia, and Red T, a non-profit organization advocating for the protection of linguists at risk, together with PEN International and the International Refugee Assistance Project – would greatly value your support and guidance on how best to proceed in working towards a UN Resolution comparable to those enhancing the safety of journalists (for instance, S/RES/1738 (2006)).



In a year that marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Resolution 1265 and the adoption of the Protection of Civilians as an item on the Security Council's agenda, and in view of the grave exposure of our colleagues, such a thematic resolution would constitute a life-saving building block in the POC architecture.





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A delegation from our coalition would welcome the opportunity to meet with you in person to discuss the issue further, especially in light of the related progress we are making with member states, which includes an upcoming information event at UN headquarters in New York.



We appreciate your time and consideration and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Maya Hess, President, Red T  
Linda Fitchett, Chair, Conflict Zone Group, International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC)  
Kevin Quirk, President, International Federation of Translators (FIT)  
Aurora Humarán, President, International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters (IAPTI)



Angela Sasso, President, Critical Link International (CLI)  
Debra Russell, President, World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI)  
Maurizio Viezzi, President, Conférence Internationale Permanente d'Instituts Universitaires de Traducteurs et Interprètes (CIUTI)



Jennifer Clément, President, PEN International  
Loredana Polezzi, President, and the Executive Council, International Association of Translation and Intercultural Studies (IATIS)  
Betsy Fisher, Director of Strategy, International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP)  
Ivana Bučko, President, European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (EFSLI)  
Daniela Perillo, President, European Legal Interpreters and Translators Association (EULITA)



Pascal Rillof, President, European Network for Public Service Interpreting and Translation (ENPSIT)  
Humphrey Tonkin, Chair, Study Group on Language and the United Nations