



**Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to
Human Rights Defenders (EMHRF)**

ACTIVITY REPORT

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1. Introduction

Six decades after the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and despite the progress accomplished after successive democratic reforms around the world, the Middle East and North Africa region still lags “behind Africa, the Americas and Europe in developing effective legal frameworks and enforcement systems for the promotion and protection of people’s human rights.”¹

Governments in the region continue to argue that security concerns trump human rights, and as a result violations continue to occur. This situation is of particular concern because it is taking place in an area affected by a high degree of political, economic and social paralysis and by conflict situations with tragic and fearsome outcomes. The war in Iraq lost little of its intensity in 2007, and its repercussions threaten the stability of the entire region. Thousands of people have been killed, horribly mutilated and tortured, while millions have been forced to flee their homes. The Middle East peace process has stalled and the closure of the border in the Gaza Strip plunged the population into an unprecedented humanitarian crisis.² As for North Africa, it continues to witness criminal attacks with tragic consequences.

While some progress has been noted in Morocco and Lebanon,³ the “war on terrorism” has been used to justify the broadening of government powers against civil society, which is subjected to growing repression. States of emergency in effect in many parts of the region were even renewed in several countries in 2007. Constitutional and legislative changes made during the year have raised concerns that new setbacks await independent non-governmental organisations, while their governance, funding sources and activities are already under close – and often excessive – scrutiny by the authorities. The instrumentalization of the judiciary also remains commonplace in the region.

Even as human rights defenders “carried the torch for all those who identify with the standards set down so persuasively 60 years ago,”⁴ they remain among the principal targets of repression throughout the region.⁵ In Libya, defenders are unable to identify themselves and express their views openly and independently because of threats by the authorities. In countries such as Syria, Egypt and Tunisia, they are prevented from registering their organisations legally, despite the fact that “freedom of association is inseparable from freedom of opinion, of expression and of information... and plays a determining role in any democratic reform project [and is] in many respects, a barometer of the state of basic freedoms.”⁶ In Algeria, the authorities systematically rejected any autonomous actions taken by defenders in support of victims of enforced disappearances, abductions, rape and torture during a decade of armed confrontations in the 1990s, thus diminishing the hope that those responsible will be held to account and the fate of the victims will be disclosed. In Syria, the advocates of pluralist democratic reforms have been prosecuted in courts that did not comply with international standards of competence, independence and impartiality, and have been arbitrarily detained. In Palestine, Tunisia, Algeria, Syria and several other countries, defenders are subjected to ever more repressive restrictions on their freedoms of movement, expression

¹ Amnesty International, *Report 2008: Middle East and North Africa*, POL 10/001/2008.

² Human Rights Watch, *2008 Report: Democracy Charade Undermines Rights*, <http://hrw.org/englishwr2k8/docs/2008/01/31/usint17940.htm>

³ Despite Israel’s military intervention during the summer of 2006 and Syria’s interference.

⁴ Amnesty International, *Report 2008: Middle East and North Africa*, POL 10/001/2008.

⁵ As shown by the indicators identified in the report submitted by the Special Representative of the Secretary General on the situation of human rights defenders, Hila Jihani, *Promotion and Protection of all Human Rights, Civil, Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, including the right to development*, A/HRC/7/28, 31 January 2008, pp. 20-23.

⁶ Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, *Freedom of Association in the Euro-Mediterranean Region*, December 2007, p. 6.

and assembly.⁷ To these restrictions and prohibitions have been added, in countries such as Egypt and especially Syria, “security” related threats regarding the funding of independent organisations by foreign sources, as well as deliberate and unfair allegations of “normalisation” with Israel that have been made against them.⁸ The threats faced by defenders range from arrests and arbitrary detention to harassment, libel, intimidation, brutality, torture, reprisals against family and friends, the destruction or theft of professional equipment, false accusations and unlawful convictions, abductions, enforced disappearances, death threats or summary executions.

All of these different measures taken against human rights defenders and organisations in the southern Mediterranean region are in violation of the obligations of these countries under the international instruments to which they are parties, and represent a distortion of those principles.⁹ Given the regional climate, it has been deemed necessary to give human rights defenders not only political support¹⁰ but also tangible financial assistance that is provided in the timeframes and with the flexibility and discretion needed to allow them to pursue their testimony, advocacy and debate activities as well as their actions in promoting and defending human rights.

In order to achieve that last objective, the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders has provided assistance to approximately fifteen organisations, groups and defenders devoted to encouraging, supporting, protecting and monitoring respect for human rights so that they may continue their work, viz.:

- 1) Short-term financial assistance, provided quickly, discreetly and in tangible form to defenders in difficulty or at risk because of their activities in the region;
- 2) Financial assistance aimed at strengthening the ability of defenders to pursue their work in the southern Mediterranean over the medium and long term.

2. Executive Summary

The year 2007 has highlighted a number of major challenges facing human rights organisations and defenders in the southern and eastern Mediterranean. These challenges are closely related to the nature of their activities and to broad political trends occurring at the national and international levels. The requests received by the Foundation are a reflection of these trends and have emphasised the support role that the Foundation must play, in cooperation with regional and international bodies active in the protection of human rights defenders, in providing the latter with effective support. These trends, and the position adopted by the Foundation, mainly hinge on four issues:

⁷ Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the OMCT and FIDH, *Annual Report 2007*, http://www.omct.org/pdf/Observatory/2008/annual_report_2007/report2007obs_eng.pdf.

⁸ The presence of Israeli representatives at any meeting can be used as a pretext for this type of allegation, with very serious consequences.

⁹ These instruments include: the human rights instruments of the United Nations – in particular the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the two international covenants on civil and political rights and on economic, social and cultural rights; the UN conventions establishing monitoring mechanisms (torture, racial discrimination, discrimination against women, children’s rights, the rights of migrant workers and their families); the conventions and standards of the International Labour Organization (ILO); the UN’s special procedures and non-treaty mechanisms; the Declaration on human rights defenders; and the UN resolution establishing the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on human rights defenders – as well as the European Union’s guidelines on human rights defenders, association agreements between the EU and the countries of the Mediterranean, and the provisions of national action plans under the ENP.

¹⁰ The EMHRF cooperates with other regional and international organisations whose primary goal is to provide human rights defenders with political support, such as the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of OMCT and FIDH, the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN), etc.

2.1. Imprisonment, ill treatment and health problems

Torture and ill treatment administered during interrogations and arbitrary detentions continue to be used routinely in several countries of the region. Defenders are faced with serious health problems as a result. In view of this situation, the Foundation pursued discussions undertaken the previous year to identify the rehabilitation and reintegration needs of defenders who are victims of torture and to follow up with concrete measures on this issue in one country of the region, in partnership with international organisations. More generally, the Foundation has decided to incorporate these issues within the mandates of its field missions. These missions, which the board has decided to send on a systematic basis, will enable the Foundation to understand better the needs and emergency situations faced by defenders in those countries.

2.2. Instrumentalisation of the Judiciary and repression of dissidents

The instrumentalization of the judiciary, the physical and psychological harassment of defenders and their families, the destruction of their professional equipment, the lack of legal recognition of human rights activities in the region, and the subsequent freezing of assets of some organisations have remained constant means of pressure against defenders, most of whom are seen as dissidents. Naturally, defenders have sought to obtain tangible, secure and flexible financial support in order to pursue their activities at the national level. In addition, whenever it has been requested to do so, the Foundation has encouraged the involvement of other national, regional and international organisations with a mandate to provide political and legal assistance to defenders. At the same time, this makes it possible to develop the most effective means of following up on the work accomplished by the defenders. The purpose of this approach is to foster effective, complementary interventions aimed at supporting the defenders concerned and help them continue their activities in the region.

2.3. Especially vulnerable groups

Groups identified as being particularly vulnerable or in need of targeted assistance were the focus of special attention in 2007. The ongoing conflicts in the Near East and Iraq, coupled with human rights violations, have had profound repercussions on refugees in several countries of the region. Many refugees are confined in camps with terrible living conditions, are victims of discrimination and have no access to education, work and medical care. Given the extent of the problem, many organisations dedicated to the protection of the rights of migrants and asylum seekers have seen a significant expansion of their activities. The Foundation has responded by providing assistance to strengthen their activities in the region. At the same time – and in a very different area of concern – there has been an increase in the region of the number of groups and organisations working for the protection of individual rights, such as LGBTQ¹¹ groups. In some countries, laws and practices affecting LGBTQ are explicitly discriminatory. The organisations and defenders who challenge these laws and practices and denounce their negative impact on the rights of LGBTQ are very seldom recognised or face many difficulties in their attempts to pursue their activities freely and effectively. In addition to following up on the situations in which the Foundation's assistance has been requested, field visits should also make it possible to identify other vulnerable groups whose urgent needs have recently become a matter of concern.

2.4. Limited human resources and operational difficulties

Despite the ever more repressive government policies targeted at human rights defenders, several groups of defenders have attempted to reorganise their activities in a number of countries. In addition, several smaller groups have tried to establish their activities on a more professional basis. These groups, which

¹¹ Lesbians, gays, bisexual, transsexual, questioning.

operate on a volunteer basis or even “illegally” in terms of national legislation, often do not have the skills or the resources needed to develop projects that meet the criteria set by the major donors. The strengthening of their human and operational resources with small amounts of money is all the more necessary because these types of resources are seldom supported by the major international institutions. In addition to short-term assistance, a policy of support has been undertaken to help these groups to diversify their activities over the middle and long term with a view to broadening their action. Finally, the Foundation has also focused on initiatives that seek to foster coordination and alliances among the organisations as well as the networking of some of their activities. In the eyes of the Foundation, the diversification of partnerships and the search for synergies represent important factors in the strategic strengthening of the capacities of civil society organisations.

3. Interventions and Activities in Support of Human Rights Organisations, Groups and Defenders

The assistance provided to human rights defenders by the Foundation can be divided into three broad categories, outlined below. One should note, however, that it is not possible to distinguish clearly among certain types of intervention, especially between those aimed at strengthening human and physical resources and those intended to support innovative activities.

3.1. Urgent interventions in support of human rights defenders facing difficulties or at risk

The EMHRF acted on an emergency basis to provide support for several human rights defenders because they were the victims of human rights violations in their own country.¹²

In particular, the Foundation provided quick, tangible and discreet assistance to several defenders and their families who were the targets of constant psychological and physical harassment, acts of vandalism and measures depriving them of their freedom, in order to enable them to overcome these challenges and take part in training abroad long enough to be able to recuperate their strength and resume their activities.

A lawyer and human rights defender, who was the target of vandalism because of his activities in protecting victims of human rights violations in his country, received emergency support from the Foundation to allow him to move into new offices and purchase computer hardware and automated office supplies.

The Foundation also provided assistance to a human rights defender who was arbitrarily deprived of his freedom because of his activities in promoting democratisation and respect for human rights in his country, thus putting his family in a very precarious situation as a result of the lack of resources to meet basic needs (rent, schooling for the children, transportation, etc.).

Two human rights defenders who were the targets of constant pressure and harassment received support from the Foundation to enable them to take part in training devoted to international instruments and mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights that are applicable in their country, and to give them “breathing room” in a safe environment and strengthen their ability to resume their activities.

¹² Generally speaking, the amounts provided in the context of emergency interventions were between €3,000 and €6,000, and the duration of the support provided did not exceed one year.

Discreet financial support was also provided for groups of human rights defenders who were targeted by governments (denial or suspension of legal recognition, political subversion of the judicial system, freezing of assets, etc.). Foundation assistance enabled them to continue their activities, which are essential for the strengthening, promotion and protection of human rights and democratisation.

For example, in 2007 the Foundation continued to provide support to a human rights organisation that was arbitrarily dissolved and saw its assets frozen without advance notice because of its position against government policies and practices, which were in violation of international human rights standards.

As could be foreseen in 2005 and 2006, many human rights defenders in the region continue to face serious health problems because they were deprived of their freedom and were the victims of ill treatment. The Foundation pursued its efforts in this area in 2007 and established a working relationship with the Rehabilitation and Research Centre for Torture Victims (RCT) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)¹³ to explore initiatives and alternatives to facilitate the long-term psychological and physical rehabilitation of these defenders, as well as their reintegration into society. The first step in this cooperation took the form of a mission of experts to the region. The results will be the subject of further discussions during 2008 in an effort to define the mechanisms and procedures that should be put in place to provide these defenders with long-term support.

3.2. Interventions to strengthen human and operational resources

The EMHRF provided financial support to human rights organisations and defenders to help them strengthen their human and physical resources and establish structures or effectively carry out their activities in the region in 2007. This support is aimed mainly at enabling them to strengthen their ability to pursue their activities in the region over the medium and long term.¹⁴ Under this project, strategic financial support is provided to defenders who wish to develop and implement programmes and projects dealing with innovative, priority thematic areas in the region.

In particular, the Foundation provided support for the **purchase of equipment and rents as well as for hiring and training the staff needed to carry out activities and raise funds.**

The Foundation provided support to strengthen the human resources and management capabilities of a human rights organisation that is the only entity capable of offering free legal aid and documenting the violations of the basic rights of a targeted community in an occupied area. As a result, this volunteer-based organisation was able to become more professional in its operations and in particular to hire a coordinator for its activities and a person responsible for fund-raising so as to ensure its ability to pursue its activities over the medium and long term.

The Foundation also provided support to a group of human rights defenders which was denied legal recognition by the authorities of the country because of its position in favour of democratisation. Thanks to this assistance, the group was able to establish an office and hire the staff needed to maintain its activities.

¹³ Both organisations are EMHRN members and associates, and thus members of the EMHRF's Council of Representatives.

¹⁴ The amounts provided in the context of interventions aimed at strengthening capacities were mainly in the range of €20,000 to €30,000, and the duration of the support did not exceed one year.

The Foundation supported the hiring of investigators and the purchase of equipment needed to allow an organisation to launch a unique project aimed at establishing a database on the victims of terrorism in a country in the region. This database should enable the organisation to develop and strengthen its activities, which include the provision of legal aid to defend of the rights of the families of victims of terrorism, denounce impunity and promote truth and justice.

The Foundation supported a small organisation that provides assistance and legal advice to refugees and asylum seekers as well as legal representation for those who are victims of arbitrary and incommunicado detention of indeterminate duration. Because the programme has only limited human resources, the EMHRF's financial assistance helped to strengthen its team by hiring someone responsible for fund-raising, making it possible for the organisation to develop its activities and strengthen its ability to pursue them over the long term.

In its role as mediator and advisor to its beneficiaries, the Foundation has encouraged and supported the development of annual and/or multi-year strategies backed by a fund-raising plan. The Euro-Mediterranean Foundation was thus able to respond strategically to their needs and/or provide assistance in their search for other donors who are in a better position to support their activities over the long term. In some cases, the Foundation facilitated contacts and provided a list of potential donors as well as assistance in submitting funding applications as needed.

3.3. Interventions in support of innovative activities within the regional context

The Foundation also provided financial assistance for projects dealing with innovative and priority thematic areas within the regional context, focusing on projects targeting groups that could be seen as being especially vulnerable or requiring special assistance in 2007.¹⁵

Specifically, the Foundation provided support for projects aimed at **enhancing the participation of women and youth, combating impunity and protecting the rights of refugees and asylum seekers.**

The Foundation provided support to an organisation working to promote and secure the legal recognition of the status of full citizens for women with regard to their human rights, in particular their rights to education, employment, housing and health. The organisation hoped to give momentum to its activities and open a new support centre providing legal and administrative assistance aimed at allowing women victims of violence to reintegrate into society. The Foundation's financial assistance enabled the organisation to establish this new centre and pursue its activities more effectively.

The Foundation provided financial assistance to a group seeking to establish a new structure aimed at providing protection and financial and administrative assistance to women who identify themselves as lesbian, bisexual or transgender. Because of the sensitive and discreet nature of the action contemplated, the group was not in a position to receive support from the major funding agencies. The support granted by the EMHRF enabled the group to establish the new structure and develop its annual action plan for the protection and promotion of the rights of lesbian, bisexual and transgender women.

¹⁵ The amounts provided in the context of interventions aimed at supporting innovative activities were mainly in the range of €4,000 and €20,000, and the duration of the support did not exceed one year.

The Foundation provided financial assistance to an organisation working with various local community groups seeking to support the participation of war-affected women in social change and the promotion of the right to health for all as a fundamental human right. The EMHRF's support allowed the organisation to develop exchanges between women health professionals aimed at strengthening their capacity to respond to emergency situations and to develop common practice standards enabling them to promote the right to health for all as a fundamental human right.

In its role as proactive intermediary for its beneficiaries, the EMHRF also encouraged some defenders and organisations to make contact with national institutions developing similar projects in other countries of the region and with regional and international networks involved in the promotion and protection of human rights. The purpose of such contacts was to enable the participants to share information on their experiences, develop synergies and coordinate their actions, thereby receiving support of a non-financial nature that enhances the sustainability of their activities.

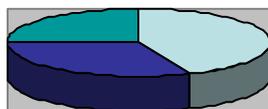
4. Quantitative Evaluation of Interventions in 2007

To facilitate an understanding of the Foundation's interventions in 2007, a quantitative summary is provided below taking into consideration the following dimensions:

- The category/type of intervention
- The thematic areas
- The gender perspective
- The country targeted
- The intervention time frames

4.1. Percentage distribution of funding grants by category/type of intervention

2006

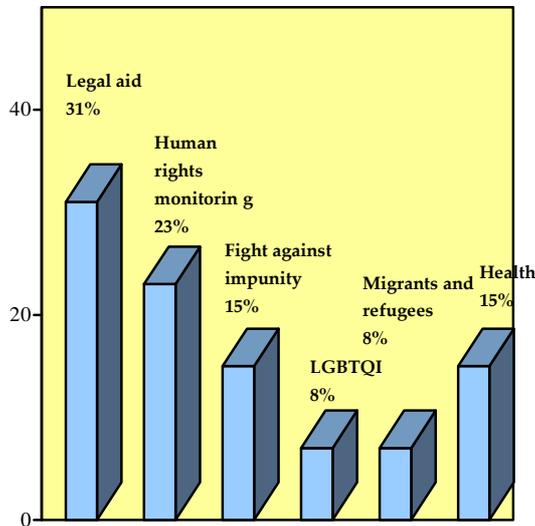


2007



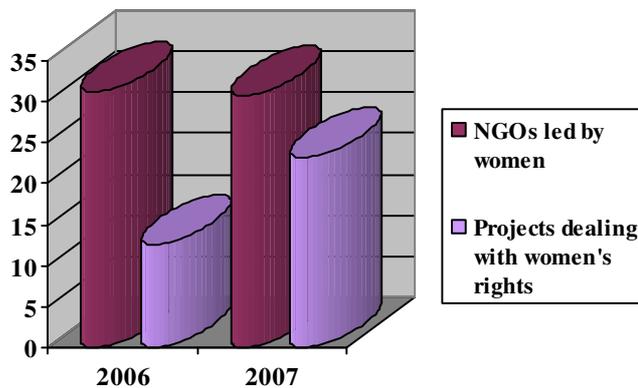
Interventions in support of human and physical resources grew steadily in 2005 and 2006. Today, they represent a majority of interventions relative to emergency actions. This increase is mainly a reflection of the desire of many organisations to conduct their activities on a more professional basis through reinforcing their human resources and management capacities while at the same time, some of the funding agencies do not always include this objective among their priorities.

4.2. Percentage distribution of funding grants by thematic area



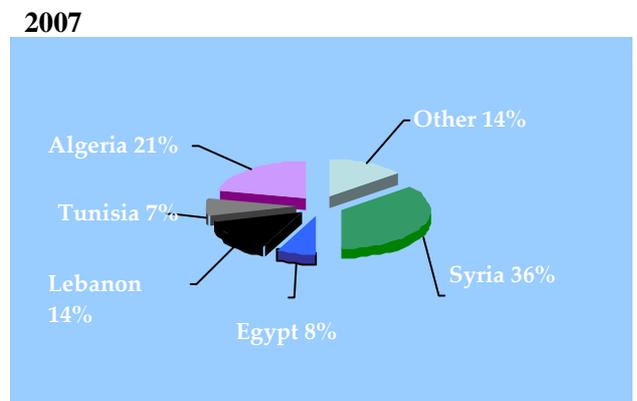
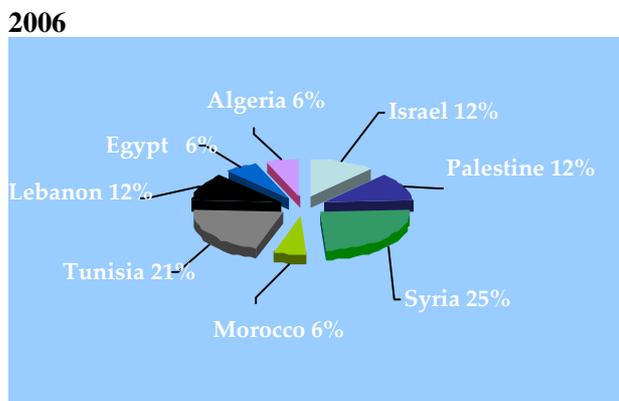
As part of its interventions in 2007, the EMHRF therefore focused on groups that are especially vulnerable in the regional context. The traditional activities (free legal aid to victims of violations, human rights monitoring) still remain the main thematic areas. However, the interventions in support of vulnerable groups strive to grow significantly (fight against impunity, protection of the rights of LGBTQI, migrants and refugees, health of defenders).

4.3. Percentage distribution of funding grants from a gender perspective



The gender perspective is an integral part of the EMHRF's intervention strategy. The specific situation and role of women human rights defenders require particular attention because pressures against them may have different consequences for them and they may face additional challenges. Accordingly, the EMHRF attaches particular importance to projects that are explicitly designed to deal with issues related to gender and to the greater involvement of women.

4.4. Percentage distribution of funding grants by country



The data for 2007 highlight a continued increase in the needs expressed by human rights defenders in Algeria and Syria, priority countries for the Foundation's interventions, given the context in which civil society must operate. The noticeable reduction in the number of grants to Palestine and Morocco in 2007 mainly reflects the fact that many other sources of funding are available to support defenders in those countries.

4.5. The intervention time frames

Within the framework of its procedure applying to interventions carried out in response to an urgent request¹⁶, the Foundation's Board makes a decision within 10 days of the reception of the request. In exceptional cases, the decision may be made within a shorter time period. In 2007, the average time needed to process files from the date the request was forwarded to the EMHRF to the date the funds granted were received by the beneficiary was 27 days.

Interventions aimed at strengthening human and physical resources and supporting innovative activities are debated at regular meetings of the Board. In 2007, the average time needed to process regular files between the date the request was forwarded to the EMHRF and the date the funds granted were received by the beneficiary was 60 days.

5. Organisational Matters and Sustainability

5.1. Meetings

In addition to regular consultations by electronic means, the members of the Board met in March and September 2007 to follow up on the implementation of the Foundation's activities and develop a strategy designed to assist human rights organisations and defenders in the Euro-Mediterranean region. As well, EMHRF representatives took part in NGO meetings and travelled throughout the region to meet with human rights defenders and recipients of funding grants and to learn about their needs and consider strategic options in response to those needs.

5.2. Information and communication

In 2007, the EMHRF maintained its policy of confidentiality with respect to most of the information about the recipients of its funding. This policy was instituted and is maintained because of the serious risks faced by those who request funding and receive support, and by other defenders working for the promotion and protection of human rights in countries of the Euro-Mediterranean region. At the same time, however, the Foundation ensures the transparency of its activities by providing its major donors with comprehensive information on its interventions and activities in support of human rights organisations, groups and defenders in the region.

¹⁶ See Appendix 1 of this report.

The Foundation also regularly updated and expanded its website, which describes clearly the new guidelines governing the submission of urgent and regular funding requests¹⁷ and sets out the deadlines for submitting applications, in the Foundation's three working languages (English, Arabic and French), thus making this information and these basic documents accessible to all: <http://www.emhrf.org/>.

A leaflet summarising the Foundation's interventions in support of human rights defenders as well as its funding guidelines is being finalised in English, Arabic and French.

5.3. Fund-raising and outreach

In 2007, the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders enjoyed the trust of, and received generous contributions from, the Dutch Foreign Ministry, the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), as well as a private Danish foundation.

In addition, the Board of the Foundation worked to define a fund-raising strategy, including membership in the European Foundation Centre (EFC),¹⁸ an international association of foundations which, among other things, promotes information sharing and cooperation among European foundations and their counterparts elsewhere. The Foundation became an associate member of the EFC in 2007.

5.4. Sustainability

The sustainability of the EMHRF's actions is based on the following elements:

- Access to flexible, quick and localised interventions is essential and significantly strengthens the ability of human rights defenders to continue their work in the region.
- The EMHRF has direct access to the members of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN), and thus to a unique and highly qualified source of knowledge that makes it possible to quickly obtain the reliable and in-depth information it needs to carry out its activities, thus enhancing the quality and targeting of its interventions.
- The EMHRF focuses its action on a specific and well-circumscribed region, which allows it to develop a specific profile and be a leading player in its field of intervention.
- If needed, the EMHRF encourages the involvement and mobilisation of other national, regional and international agencies to provide long-term institutional support to human rights defenders.
- The EMHRF takes carefully calculated risks in extending modest funding to defenders at risk and to small emerging organisations, as well as in support of innovative activities.
- Thanks to its proximity to civil-society actors and organisations, the EMHRF is in a position to offer advice and act as an intermediary between defenders and international donors in those cases where a funding request is a clear candidate for support by another organisation.
- The EMHRF actively seeks to diversify and secure funding sources in pursuing its activities in support of human rights defenders in the region.
- Last but not least, the EMHRF treats the right and freedom of association as a focal element of its intervention strategy.

¹⁷ See Appendix 1 of this report.

¹⁸ An international association of foundations and corporate donors dedicated to creating an enabling legal and fiscal environment for foundations, documenting the foundation landscape, strengthening the infrastructure of the sector, and promoting collaboration, both among foundations and between foundations and other actors, in Europe and beyond.

5.5. Internal governance

The Board elected a new member, Madame Leila Rhiwi, a Moroccan national who is the Maghreb coordinator for the Women's Human Rights Programme at the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

During 2007, the Foundation's Secretariat included the following staff members:

- Anne-Sophie Schaeffer (a graduate in international public law) was employed as a full-time project coordinator in Copenhagen.
- Poul Collemorten (a graduate in auditing and accountancy), who replaced Nels Lyngsø in March 2007, was employed as a part-time accountant in Copenhagen.
- Jens Juul Petersen (a university student in Islamic history and studies), who replaced Birgitte Søgaaard Andersen in June 2007, was employed as a part-time assistant in Copenhagen.

In 2007, the Board also conducted an exploratory interview with a potential candidate for the position as EMHRF Executive Director.

The EMHRF developed interim solutions to support the work of the Secretariat, and in particular was able to draw on services provided by the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) in 2007:

- Organisational supervision services
- Computer services
- Administrative services

The audit of the Foundation was conducted by *Deloitte*, an independent firm in Copenhagen.

APPENDIX 1: Historical perspective on the Foundation's intervention criteria and new guidelines governing funding requests

1. Historical perspective on the Foundation's intervention criteria

a) Eligibility of human rights defenders

The project targets human rights defenders, regardless of gender, who:

- actively promote and advocate the universally recognised rights and freedoms of third parties;
- act individually or as part of a group;
- use peaceful and non-violent means in their work.

The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders contains an enumeration of potential categories of human rights defenders: defenders of human rights in their individual capacity; members of human rights organisations; women's rights organisations; lawyers; journalists; judges; members of religious, ethnic and/or linguistic minorities; organisations working in the fields of civic education and youth; organisations working against different forms of discrimination; organisations combating violence committed against women; members of organisations working for the rights of children; organisations working for the rehabilitation of the victims of torture; activists fighting for penal and prison reform, as well for the abolition of capital punishment (or for moratoria suspending executions); militants against impunity and for truth and reconciliation (transitional justice); organisations fighting corruption and promoting good governance; activists focusing on the links between human rights and international trade; activists for free and fair elections; organisations advocating for migrants and refugees; organisations working for the integration of handicapped persons; trade unionists; writers; members of parliament; environmental activists; activists for development (fight against poverty, urban rehabilitation, rural integration projects, groups involved in income-generating activities, etc), as well as activists for health care and the fight against epidemics.

All of the individuals, groups or entities who are or may be the targets of violations of their fundamental rights as defined in regional and international human rights instruments, are eligible for financial assistance within this project without any prerequisites other than the purpose and autonomous nature of their activities.¹⁹

b) Areas of intervention of human rights defenders

In the context of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, human rights defenders are identified on the basis of their commitment to **improving the protection of all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights** as defined in, among others, the following regional and international legal instruments:

- UN legal instruments pertaining to human rights, including: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the international covenants on civil and political rights and on economic, social and cultural rights; the conventions providing for monitoring mechanisms (torture, racial discrimination, discrimination against women, the rights of the child); and the conventions and standards of the International Labour Organization;

¹⁹ Under current European legislation, however, no minor may receive directly any financial assistance granted as part of this project.

- Special procedures and non-treaty mechanisms of the United Nations;
- The Declaration on Human Rights Defenders;
- The UN resolution establishing the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on human rights defenders;
- The EU guidelines on human rights defenders;
- The association agreements between the EU and the countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean, as well as the provisions of national action plans under the European Neighborhood Policy.

c) Geographic scope of intervention of human rights defenders

The project is aimed at defenders who pursue human rights activities in the following countries: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Palestine and Israel. Special attention is devoted to **the countries of the region where the needs are especially critical because of the regional context (Syria, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt)**.

Projects with positive spill-over effects outside the region (in Europe and the Persian Gulf) may receive funding if it is shown that they have a positive impact on the situation of human rights defenders in the region.

2. Procedures governing urgent funding requests

Applicants seeking an emergency intervention by the Foundation in support of their activities must submit a written request in Arabic, English or French that meets the guidelines published on the Foundation's website.

The guidelines governing emergency interventions are as follows:

These guidelines are streamlined in order to facilitate quick processing of funding requests.

1. Urgent funding requests

- Provide a brief description of the activities for which emergency assistance is requested and of the expected outcomes.
- Describe the threats against the defender(s) or against the pursuit of his/her/their activities, and the urgent nature of the situation.
- Provide a budget for the activity in question, accompanied by explanatory notes.
- Indicate whether the request has been submitted to, and is being considered by, other potential donors. If so, provide the name of the donor and the amount requested, and advise the Foundation of the outcome of that request, be it positive or negative.

2. Political, legal and financial profile of the applicant

- Give a brief description of past and ongoing activities, and of the funding received to implement these activities.
- Provide the names of human rights organisations acting as partners in your activities.
- Provide the names and coordinates of two references or partners who should be contacted to support or endorse your request.

The EMHRF Secretariat is responsible for assessing funding requests on the basis of the guidelines. The Secretariat is in regular contact with defenders in order to obtain all the information required to process funding applications. All requests for emergency funding are treated on a priority basis by the Secretariat.

Emergency interventions follow a specific consultative process:

- Requests for emergency funding are considered when applicants can show that an intervention by the EMHRF will help to counter threats against their lives and/or those of members of their family, or against the pursuit of their activities.
- The amount of funding requested may not exceed € 5,000.
- The request is such that it cannot be supported on emergency basis by another national, regional or international organisation.
- The EMHRF Board members are consulted through a secure forum, by e-mail or teleconference, and render their decision within a maximum of 10 days after the reception of the request. In exceptional cases – essentially situations involving threats against the health or safety of the applicant – the decision may be made within a shorter time period.
- All requests, including those which are denied, receive a written reply. Even when an application is denied, the EMHRF Secretariat may follow up if it can be determined that another organisation is in a position to support the applicant's request. To provide effective support to human rights defenders, the Foundation will, if needed, attempt to direct them to national, regional or international organisations that have programmes geared to protecting their safety, launching urgent appeals, providing political support and legal defence, intervening with intergovernmental mechanisms, launching public campaigns and providing physical and psychological rehabilitation services.

3. Procedures governing ordinary funding requests

Applicants seeking an ordinary intervention by the Foundation in support of their activities must submit a written request in Arabic, English or French that meets the guidelines published on the Foundation's website.

The guidelines governing ordinary interventions are as follows:

1. Introduction

- Indicate the amount of the funding requested. Submit a budget or provide explanations about the costs of the project or the needs that are to be funded.
- Explain the urgent nature of the situation, if any, and indicate the duration of the period for which support is requested.

2. Political and legal profile of the applicant

- Provide a brief profile of the individual, organization or entity making the request.
- Describe briefly the origins and establishment of the organisation (registration).
- Describe briefly the composition and structure of the organisation.
- Provide a brief summary of past activities.

3. Financial profile of the applicant

- Provide data on total revenues and expenditures in the previous year. If possible, include a copy of your latest annual report.
- Include a complete list of past and current donors.

- Indicate whether you have experienced funding difficulties in the past. If so, provide an explanation.

4. *Funding request*

- Provide a brief description of the project or activity for which funding is requested.
- Indicate the extent to which your project will contribute to and complement projects already put in place by other NGOs working in the same area in your region. Provide details on the innovative nature of the project or activity.
- Indicate whether you have submitted your funding application to other potential donors. If you have, provide the name of the donor and the amount requested, and advise the Foundation of the results of your efforts to secure funding, whether successful or not. If you have not applied for funding elsewhere, explain why.

5. *References*

- Submit a list of all human rights organisations and/or groups with which you are working or cooperating in your country and elsewhere in the context of your activities.
- Provide the names and coordinates of two references or partners who should be contacted to support or endorse your request.

In normal circumstances, an initial reply is sent within 15 days in response to all information requests and regular funding applications.

Interventions aimed at supporting the strengthening of capacities or innovative activities follow a regular procedure:

- Interventions aimed at helping to strengthen human and physical resources or supporting innovative activities are debated at the EMHRF Board's regular meetings, held twice a year.
- Strategic funding provided to human rights defenders may not exceed € 40,000. It usually falls between € 5,000 and € 20,000.
- As a rule, the maximum duration of support for any project or initiative is 18 months.
- A funding request may not be supported under the same conditions by another national, regional or international organisation.
- All requests, including those which are denied, receive a written reply. Even when an application is denied, the EMHRF Secretariat may follow up if another organisation is in a position to support the applicant's request. To provide effective support to human rights defenders in difficult situations, the Foundation will, if needed, attempt to direct them to national, regional or international organisations that have programmes aimed at supporting and strengthening human rights in general, training services for human rights defenders, and regional and international networks of human rights defenders.