



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

ANNUAL NARRATIVE REPORT

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CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Crackdown on dissidents, deprivation of freedom and ill treatment
- Increased physical and psychological harassment
- Instrumentalisation of the Judiciary
- Especially vulnerable groups
- Operating difficulties of independent NGOs

3. INTERVENTIONS IN SUPPORT OF HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS, GROUPS AND DEFENDERS

- Urgent interventions in support of defenders facing difficulties or at risk
- Strategic interventions aimed at strengthening the resources of defenders and independent NGOs to develop and implement programmes and projects focused on innovative or sensitive thematic areas within the regional context

4. FOLLOWING-UP ON THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

- Visit to Algeria
- Follow-up meetings in Europe

5. STATISTICAL OVERVIEW OF 2009 INTERVENTIONS

- Types of intervention
- Thematic areas
- Activities of recipients
- Types of expenditures covered
- Types of follow-up
- Gender
- Countries

6. ORGANISATIONAL MATTERS

- External evaluation, 2005-2008
- Partnerships and fundraising
- Information and communication
- Risk analysis and viability
- Internal governance

ANNEX 1: Overview of EMHRF Interventions, 2005-2009

1. Introduction

The year 2009 was marked either by missed opportunities for more open societies or by a worsening of the human rights situation in the southern Mediterranean.¹ Overall, the region suffers from a deficit in the implementation of major constitutional, legislative and institutional reforms by states as well as from de facto impunity, with governments often blocking investigations of human rights abuses, thus violating their own obligations under the international instruments to which the countries of the region are party.²

Instead of adopting a development model based on the human development approach in which freedoms are a central tenet,³ governments in the region continue to use the threat of terrorism and extremist political-religious movements as a pretext to suppress peaceful dissent and add to their legal arsenal, which is already repressive in most cases, new regular laws and emergency decrees aimed at restricting the effective exercise of basic rights and freedoms. For example, states of emergency remain in force in Syria, Egypt and Algeria without any justification, severely restricting rights and freedoms of expression, association and assembly. At the same time, ordinary legislation, such as the Jordanian law on associations and the amendments to that law that were ratified by the head of state in 2009, reinforce restrictions on the right to form associations that were already in place.⁴ Similarly, in a worrying trend, the Egyptian Ministry of Social Solidarity completed a draft of a new law aiming at increasingly controlling and undermining the activities of independent non-governmental organisations (NGOs),⁵ bringing further arbitrary restrictions and severe criminal penalties, even for minor infractions, to NGOs and their members as well as new authoritarian controlling powers to the executive.

These developments are all the more alarming because they are taking place in a region that is subject to a persistent lack of economic, social⁶ and political progress, where parliaments are

¹ The reports of the major international and regional human rights organisations are broadly unanimous in reaching this conclusion. See, for example, Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2010*, <http://www.hrw.org/world-report-2010>; Amnesty International, *Challenging Repression: Human Rights Defenders in the Middle East and North Africa*, MDE 01/001/2009, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE01/001/2009/en>; The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, joint programme of the FIDH and OMCT, *Steadfast in Protest, Annual Report 2009*, <http://www.omct.org/index.php?id=&lang=eng&articleId=8600>; Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) *Bastion of Impunity, Mirage of Reform: Human Rights in the Arab World, Annual Report 2009*, <http://www.cihrs.org/Images/ArticleFiles/Original/510.pdf>.

² Relevant instruments include the followings: human rights-related 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; rights of the child; rights of migrant workers and their families); as well as the treaties and standards of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the UN's special and non-treaty procedures; the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders; the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders; association agreements between the EU and countries of the Mediterranean; and the provisions of the ENP national action plans.

³ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Development Challenges for the Arab Region: A Human Development Approach*, 2009, http://204.200.211.31/contents/file/DevChallenges_Report_Vol01_Eng.pdf

⁴ *Societies Law*, 51/2008. The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) has published a comprehensive report on the right to freedom of association in the Euro-Mediterranean region; see *Freedom of Association in the Euro-Mediterranean Region: 2009 Monitoring Report*, http://en.euromedrights.org/index.php/publications/emhrn_publications/68/4075.html

⁵ Cf. the Egyptian NGOs Campaign for the Freedom to Associate, press release by 41 NGOs: *Towards the "militarization" of NGOs: A "fascist" law to strangle civil society*, Cairo, 22 March 2010. See also EMHRN press release, *EU-Egypt Association Council: The EU Should Call on the Egyptian Government to Respect Freedom of Association*, 21 April 2010. Provisions of the draft law on associations, published in the 7 March 2010 edition of the Egyptian newspaper Al Dustour. Further, see interview done with Dr. Abdel Aziz Hegazi, chairperson of the NGO Federation, published in Al Akhbar newspaper on the 10th of May.

⁶ The UNDP's 2009 report, *Development Challenges for the Arab Region*, indicates, among other things, that the overall poverty rate remains high – as much as 40 percent on average – and that the proportion of the young among the unemployed represents more than 50 percent, making the unemployment rate among the young in Arab countries the highest in the world.

generally weak and judicial systems lack independence, and are thus unable to act as counterweights to the excessive powers exercised by the executive.⁷ This lack of progress is compounded by conflict situations that result in tragic outcomes.

While improvements have been noted in Iraq and Lebanon, two countries that have experienced war in recent years, violence remains a stark reality in the regional political life. The UN fact-finding mission on the Gaza conflict held that basic principles of international humanitarian law had been violated by Israel and by Palestinian armed groups, finding that Israel's military operations in Gaza at the beginning of the year were "unprecedented in their severity and (...) their consequences would be long-lasting".⁸ While Palestinian human rights organisations fully endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the report, warning the UN General Assembly against impunity⁹ together with the main regional and international organisations, yet "investigations conducted to-date by both Israel and the Palestinian authorities have been ineffective"¹⁰. The population of the Gaza Strip is still suffocating and living under increasing isolation. Civil society organisations that condemned the abuses reported and called for a fair and impartial justice system became the targets of a series of attempts to delegitimize their work and to reduce the scope of various freedoms.¹¹

The UN's Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders has once again denounced in strong terms a worrying trend to stigmatise and criminalise defenders, whose activities are often equated by state authorities and state-owned media with those of 'terrorists' and 'enemies of the state' or, in less tense situations, of 'political opponents'. She rightly stressed that the 'important role and efforts [of defenders] in the promotion, protection and the full enjoyment of human rights by all should instead be praised'.¹² In many countries of the region, defenders nonetheless remain subject to such abuses as constant surveillance, arbitrary ban on travel outside their own country, arbitrary dismissals, physical attacks, pressures on their families and friends, acts of vandalism and malicious campaigns in the media and more recently to the escalating use of death threats.

At the top of the list - in the absence of hard evidence on the totally intolerable situation that prevails in Libya - are the practices of the judicial and security systems in Syria and Tunisia,

⁷ Amnesty International, *Challenging Repression: Human Rights Defenders in the Middle East and North Africa*, MDE 01/001/2009.

⁸ *Human Rights in Palestine and Other Occupied Arab Territories*. Report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, Conclusions and Recommendations; A/HRC/12/48 (ADVANCE 2), 24 September 2009, http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/12session/A-HRC-12-48_ADVANCE2.pdf

⁹ Cf. joint press release by Adalah – Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, Addameer, Al Dameer Association for Human Rights, Al-Haq – Law in the Service of Man, Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights, Arab Association for Human Rights, Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, Defence for Children International-Palestine Section, Ensan Center for Human Rights and Democracy, Jerusalem Legal Aid Center, Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, Ramallah Center for Human Rights Studies, Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counselling, *The Goldstone Report at the UN General Assembly: States Must Ensure Victim's Rights and Not Compromise the Rule of Law*, 4 November 2009.

¹⁰ Cf. Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, *Arab-Sponsored Draft Resolution on Goldstone Report Denies Victims' Rights and Fosters a Situation of Impunity*, Press release, 25 February 2010. See also International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), *Operation Cast Lead, Gaza Strip: One Year After, Accountability, a key challenge for peace*, December 2009, No. 533a, <http://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/IsraelPalestine533a-2.pdf>

¹¹ See in particular Adalah, Association for Civil Rights in Israel, B'Tselem, Gisha, Bimkom, HaMoked, Physicians for Human Rights, Public Committee against Torture in Israel, Rabbis for Human Rights, Yesh Din, *Position Paper: Government-Backed Legislation Curtailing Foreign Funding Seeks to Undermine Civil Society in Israel*, March 2010. Also see: EMHRN, Aprodev, CIDSE, Front Line, International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims and Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, *Joint Open Letter: Restricting the Space of Israeli Human Rights Defenders and Organisations Working in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories*, 10 March 2010.

¹² United Nations, *Promotion and Protection of All Human Rights, Civil, Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Including the Right to Development*, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Margaret Sekaggya, A/HRC/13/22, 28 December 2009: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/defenders/docs/A.HRC.13.22.pdf>

which are continuously slicing away the rights to freedom of expression, information, movement, association and assembly of human rights defenders in totally arbitrary fashion and with impunity. In 2009, while countless Syrian defenders and political activists were still languishing in prison, an extensive campaign of repression was launched against a large number of journalists, bloggers, lawyers and human rights defenders as well as leading figures in the Kurdish political movement,¹³ regularly leading to enforced disappearances and instances of torture and ill treatment. More than one hundred defenders and family members are still banned from travelling,¹⁴ even for health reasons, and independent human rights groups continue to be targeted by the authorities through court actions or the arbitrary closure of their offices. In Tunisia, the clampdown on freedom of expression, which has been condemned for many years, reached an unprecedented level in the context of the campaign leading to the October 2009 elections. Many journalists and human rights defenders who had condemned the Tunisian government's demagoguery and the transformation of the election into a plebiscite in favour of the outgoing president were attacked physically, closely watched, forced into house arrest, targeted in violent campaigns of character assassination in the pro-government media, and given arbitrary sentences of three to six months' imprisonment following unfair trials. At the same time, while most international organisations welcomed the release on parole of the leaders of the social protest movement in the mining basin,¹⁵ the protesters are still waiting for their civil and political rights to be restored and for independent investigations that have been requested into the ill treatment received while in detention. They also have not been reintegrated into their professional activities. In the same vein - and to mention only one other example - independent unions in Algeria are the ongoing targets of a government that repeatedly practises repression and manipulation.¹⁶

Although there have been modest advances in gender equality, the overall assessment continues to cause concern as some governments tend increasingly to follow the positions adopted by conservative political-religious groups in order to give their political regimes some semblance of legitimacy.¹⁷ In Syria, for example, a new draft legislation on the personal status, prepared in 2009, retains the major features of gender discrimination. At the same time, Arab governments exploit the gender issue more and more as a political tool in an attempt to improve their image in the eyes of the international community while falling well short of the implementation of needed human rights reforms.¹⁸

Against this regional backdrop, in which human rights work becomes increasingly dangerous, defenders needed not only political support but also financial support provided in a timely, flexible and discreet fashion to enable them to overcome their difficulties and to develop plans to pursue their activities in promoting respect for all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and freedoms.

¹³ All attempts to affirm cultural and social rights to the Kurdish identity have been repressed. See the November 2009 report by Human Rights Watch, *Group Denial: Repression of Kurdish Political and Cultural Rights in Syria*, <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2009/11/26/group-denial>

¹⁴ Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM), *Problem of the Travel Ban in Syria*, 2009.

¹⁵ 4-5 November 2009: See the joint release by the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, *Tunisie: Les prisonniers du bassin minier de Gafsa-Redeyef enfin libres!*, 5 November 2009.

¹⁶ See, inter alia, Comité international de soutien au syndicalisme autonome algérien (CISA), *Between repression and manipulations: the courageous combat of the Algerian autonomous trade unions*, 15 November 2009, which surveys the main campaigns orchestrated by the Algerian government and state security services against independent union leaders, including the 'cloning' of independent unions, arbitrary arrests, stalemated careers, unjustified dismissals, etc.

¹⁷ CIHRS, *Bastion of Impunity, Mirage of Reform*.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* The UN also noted the lack of sufficient progress in gender parity, as the percentage of women in Arab parliaments has not advanced and stands at only 9 percent.

It is in this context that the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders increased its responsibilities and provided assistance to 36 defenders in 2009.¹⁹

2. Executive Summary

The year 2009 has highlighted the recurring situations confronting defenders in the southern and eastern Mediterranean. These situations are closely linked to the nature of their activities but they are also related to broad political trends at the national and international levels.

The funding requests received by the Foundation are a reflection of these trends and emphasise how essential is its supporting role in partnership with regional and international bodies active in protecting and supporting defenders.

These trends, together with the positions adopted by the EMHRF, can be grouped around the following lines.

2.1. Crackdown on dissidents, deprivation of freedom and ill treatment: Several human rights defenders in the region have been subjected to deprivation of their freedom in recent years, a situation that is often compounded by ill treatment and administrative dismissal, among other things. As a consequence, not only do many defenders face serious health problems but their families find themselves in very precarious situations. The Foundation has provided support to these defenders to enable them to receive proper medical treatment and make it possible for their families to cope with basic survival needs.

2.2. Increased physical and psychological harassment: The pressures to which defenders are subjected increasingly include physical harassment (body searches, attacks against defenders and against their personal and professional belongings, etc.) and psychological measures (direct and indirect death threats, pressures on the families of detainees to dismiss their lawyers and condemn international solidarity, etc.). In most cases, a modest amount to purchase equipment or to meet other vital needs can make a substantial difference in terms of the determination of defenders to pursue their activities.

2.3. Instrumentalisation of the Judiciary: The pressures exerted against defenders also include a freeze on, or lack of, legal recognition of human rights-related activities in the region. Human rights groups and organisations have sought tangible financial support, provided in secure and flexible conditions, to help them redesign their strategies and pursue activities needed to strengthen, advance and defend human rights and democratisation in the region.

2.4. Especially vulnerable groups: Policies aimed at closing European borders and the continuing conflicts between Israel and Palestine and in Iraq have had heavy repercussions on migrants and refugees in many countries of the region. Given the scope of the problem, there have been many attempts to establish organisations devoted to protecting the rights of migrants and asylum seekers in the South, while existing groups have had to increase their activities substantially. At the same time, the number of organisations and groups working on issues of individual rights (such as LGBTQ) in the region has also risen. In some countries of the region,

¹⁹ Of the total of more than 200 information requests and funding applications received from human rights defenders, 17 percent were granted urgent financial assistance or strategic support by the Foundation during the year, in compliance with the principal selection criteria, which can be consulted on the EMHRF website, www.emhrf.org.

both the legislation and the practices affecting these persons are explicitly discriminatory. Organisations and defenders who attempt to challenge these laws and practices and their negative impact on individual rights seldom receive legal recognition or face numerous obstacles in carrying out their activities openly and effectively. Accordingly, the Foundation has paid particular attention to groups that could be considered especially vulnerable and has responded by providing support to strengthen the activities of the region's civil society in this area of focus.

2.5. Operating difficulties of independent NGOs: The region's associations have very uneven levels of operations and access to financial resources. Several independent NGOs lack the qualified human resources and physical resources they need to pursue their activities in effective manner and ensure their long-term viability. In many countries of the region where conditions are difficult, access to outside funding is very limited. There are many small organisations that would like to put their activities on a more professional footing but lack the qualifications and support needed to prepare funding applications meeting the criteria set by major donors. Thus the provision of small grants to strengthen human resources and operating capacities was needed, especially since these expenses are seldom taken into consideration by major international institutions.

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

The support provided by the Foundation to defenders in 2009 can be divided into two broad categories.

3.1. Urgent interventions in support of defenders and NGOs facing difficulties or at risk

The Foundation has acted on a short-term basis to provide emergency assistance in a timely, tangible, and confidential manner to 17 human rights defenders who were in difficulty or at risk in the region.

Particular attention was paid, in the context of this activity, to *countries in the region where the needs are particularly critical because of the context in which civil society operates (Syria, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt)*.

These interventions targeted the following situations, among others, for emergency support:

- About a dozen defenders whose lives were under threat as a result of serious health problems were given assistance so they could seek *proper medical treatments* in their country or abroad. The decisions to grant support were based on such factors as egregious violations of the defenders' rights or their inability to assume the costs involved because of their ongoing struggle in favour of human rights.
- A defender who faced arbitrary judicial proceedings because of his position in favour of respect for human rights received support to meet the *basic needs of his family*, which lived in precarious conditions following his arrest.
- Support was provided to five human rights organisations facing *sudden and/or unforeseen administrative, financial or legal obstacles* to enable them to pay operating and rental expenses and pursue their activities in favour of human rights.

- Support was provided for a project whose *success depended on time-critical factors*, aimed at providing assistance to several asylum seekers from the South and to develop mechanisms for the protection and defence of their basic rights. The decision to provide this support was based on the fact that it was difficult for the organisation to obtain funding from other donors within the proper time period and under the proper security conditions.

One of the main goals of the Foundation's interventions is to ensure that defenders and NGOs in difficulty are able to pursue their activities over the medium and long term. To that end, it has sought the involvement of regional and international partners to provide effective support to several defenders and their families. More specifically:

- The EMHRF was instrumental in having two international partners pay for the additional expenses linked to the medical treatments received by three human rights defenders and reimburse the operating and rental costs paid by a human rights organisation that was facing a deadlock situation. In three of those four cases, the Foundation acted as an intermediary.
- The EMHRF coordinated its action with a specialised non-governmental organisation (NGO) to enable six human rights defenders facing serious health problems to receive rehabilitation treatments as well as assistance towards their economic reintegration.
- The EMHRF played and continues to play an advisory role with two recently created organisations in difficulty, operating in rural areas, to familiarise them with the steps to be followed in areas such as project methodology and fundraising, and has provided them with a list of potential donors for their future projects.
- The EMHRF also coordinated four of its emergency support actions with several regional and international organisations in the context of their solidarity interventions in favour of defenders (solidarity campaigns, press releases, trial observation missions, letters to government officials, etc.).

Overall, the results of the urgent support provided to these 11 individual defenders and six NGOs were very positive:

- The interventions contributed to a notable improvement, at time 'T', in both the physical and psychological abilities of the 11 individual defenders who received urgent support to help them overcome their difficulties at the time. The situation of nine defenders improved considerably, thanks to the reimbursement of their hospital and medical costs. Unfortunately, two defenders saw no real improvement in their physical condition; one of them was unable to overcome his ailment over the long term because of a serious immune deficiency.
- The interventions also helped five human rights organisations to restore some stability and to establish a plan of action enabling them to pursue their activities on behalf of human rights. These results could not have been achieved without the Foundation's support. As for the time-critical project, the support received from the Foundation made it possible to avoid the worst for 39 of the 42 asylum seekers facing precarious conditions.

3.2. Strategic interventions aimed at strengthening the resources of defenders and independent NGOs to develop and implement programmes and projects focused on innovative or sensitive thematic areas within the regional context

At its meetings of 28-29 March and 21-22 October 2009, the Foundation's Board decided to support 22 projects submitted by 19 organisations, groups and defenders in the region. This

support made it possible, among other things, to strengthen the visibility, human resources and management capabilities needed to establish structures or ensure the effective implementation of innovative activities to protect and defend human rights in the region.

Strategic support was provided in the following situations, in particular:

- ***Payment of rental and equipment costs*** associated with the establishment of three new structures and with the strengthening of the activities of four human rights groups and organisations at the national and international level.
- ***Payment of travelling costs*** associated with monitoring missions and of the ***publication costs of reports*** on human rights violations by six groups and associations, in order to raise awareness about these violations among NGOs, governments and intergovernmental bodies at the national, regional and international levels.
- ***Recruitment of the staff needed*** to ensure the effective management of human rights projects submitted by seven organisations (legal and other advisors, project manager, accountant, etc.) and to expand contacts, and increase the fundraising prospects of two groups and organisations working on sensitive issues.
- ***Training young members*** of four organisations in human rights instruments and mechanisms, to help them develop communications tools and project management skills.

In particular, the Foundation provided support to defenders who wanted to set up and develop projects dealing with priority and sensitive issues within the regional context, and targeting groups that could be seen as particularly vulnerable or needing special assistance.

In the context of the regular proposals that were brought to the Board's attention, the following issues were given special consideration:

- Protecting the rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers
- Protecting the rights of women and strengthening their leadership
- Documenting human rights violations in general
- Protecting the rights of minorities
- Protecting economic, social and cultural rights
- Fighting against homophobia and defending the rights of LGBTQ
- Fighting against impunity

In its role as intermediary and advisor to its recipients, the Foundation:

- Encouraged and supported the development of yearly and/or multiyear action plans, in some cases backed by a fundraising strategy, by five groups and associations working in countries where the political climate is particularly difficult for NGOs. The Foundation was thus able to respond strategically to the needs of four of those groups to enable them to pursue their activities over the longer term.
- Facilitated contacts, acted as intermediary, provided a list of potential donors and/or helped in the submission of funding requests in five cases.
- Encouraged six organisations to contact other national organisations working on projects dealing with similar subjects in the country, or to contact national and regional networks. These contacts were intended to give them an opportunity to share experiences, to look at the potential for synergies and coordinated initiatives, and to receive non-financial support that enhances the scope and sustainability of their action.

It is difficult to measure the current results of the strategic funding provided by the Foundation to defenders, mainly because most of these partnerships are still ongoing. In 11 cases where the intervention has reached an advanced stage or has been completed, the following results can be mentioned:

- Thanks to documents published and travel made possible through the Foundation's support, a human rights group was able to launch an advocacy campaign that resulted in the release of a number of prisoners who had been arbitrarily sentenced and imprisoned because of their opinions.
- Two human rights organisations were able to obtain funding from other donors and to ensure, at least in part, their independence and the viability of their activities over the medium term.
- An organisation devoted to defending women's rights was able to develop a coordinated national strategy to respond to growing harassment and political persecution of human rights defenders.
- Two human rights organisations were able to establish new structures designed to support and provide advice to victims of violations. One of them received support from a national network that enabled it to heighten its profile and develop plans to pursue its activities over the long term.
- Approximately 40 NGO actors were able to take training in instruments and mechanisms linked to the protection of relevant human rights, in the development of communications tools and in project management.
- Several regional and international actors were able to receive detailed information on the situation and status of human rights violations, thanks in particular to publications produced by four groups of defenders with the support of the Foundation.

4. Following-up on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders

In 2009, monitoring and follow-up on the situation of human rights defenders was achieved mainly by establishing and maintaining regular contacts with funding recipients and with other partners of the Foundation, as mentioned above.

The purpose of this action was to assess the impact of the support provided and, where needed, to ensure prospects for longer-term support. Two additional activities were implemented in the course of the year in pursuit of this goal.

4.1. Visit to Algeria

The primary purpose of the Foundation's visit was to identify civil society activities that might benefit from EMHRF support, following an initial mission conducted by two consultants in June 2008.

The purpose of the first mission was to provide an overview of the NGO movement in this country with a difficult environment and to make recommendations. The follow-up visit made it possible to meet human rights organisations whose work had been hailed by the consultants following their 2008 visit, and also to make recommendations to the Board so it could make decisions about any proposals submitted to the Foundation.

The visit also made it possible to meet EMHRF partners to discuss ongoing projects, as well as representatives of Algerian civil society, international organisations and foreign missions to introduce them to the Foundation's work and promote cooperation and the sharing of information between these actors and the Foundation.

The report on the visit was discussed by the Board at its meeting of 28-29 March 2009, along with recommendations on new initiatives and on the follow-up. As a result, a follow-up was undertaken with five partners; support was provided to a defender in difficulty; and two NGOs received support for projects dealing with innovative and sensitive issues in the country. An account of the visit and some recommendations were also shared with several international partners of the Foundation.

4.2. Follow-up meetings in Europe

Follow-up meetings between representatives of the Foundation's Board and Secretariat and defenders in difficulty as well as recipients of EMHRF funding were held on the following dates in 2009: 4-7 June; 15-16 September; 19 November; and 26 December.

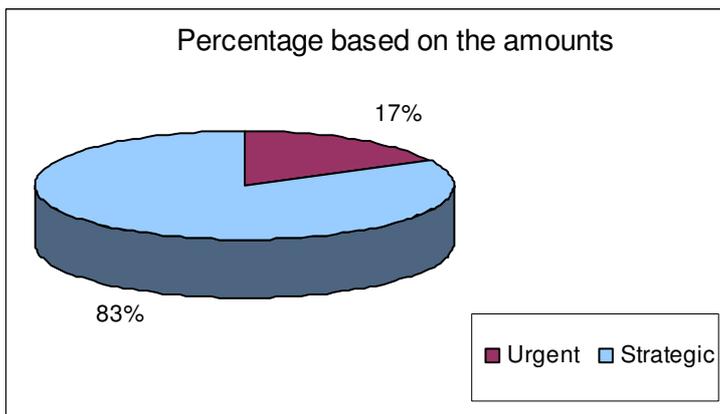
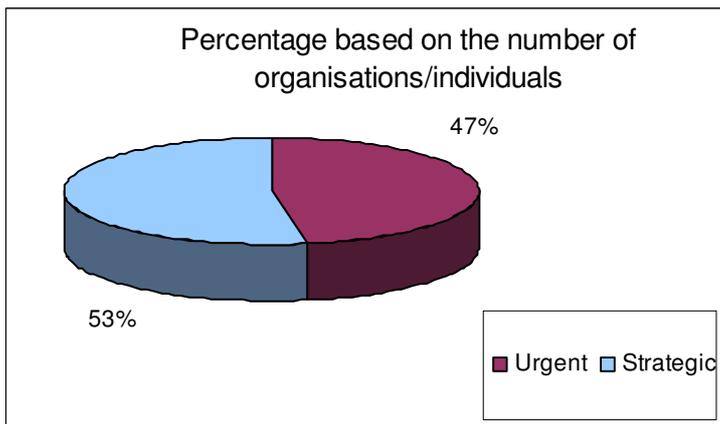
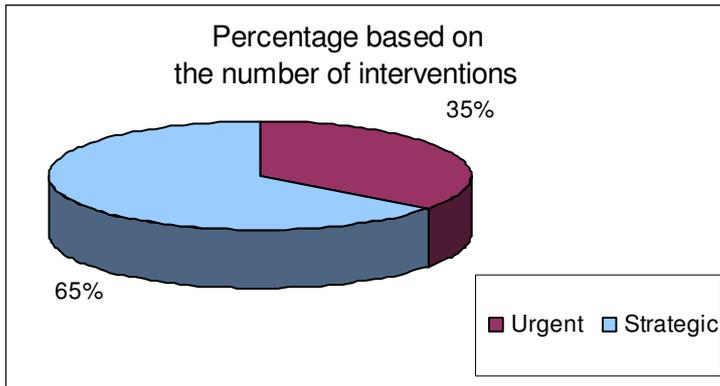
The purpose of these meetings was not only to ensure regular monitoring of the situation of human rights defenders in countries where conditions are particularly difficult, but also to facilitate cooperation and the development of coordinated actions with other regional and international partners of the Foundation in order to provide additional, nonfinancial assistance to human rights defenders in facing serious difficulties.

The results of these follow-up meetings and the coordinated action of several partners were especially favourable, as indicated at point 3. At the same time, a follow-up on the situation and needs of four human rights organisations was conducted and recommendations were made to the Board for a quick final decision.

5. Statistical Overview of 2009 Interventions

To increase the readability of the EMHRF's actions in support of defenders in 2009, the graphs in the following pages focus on: types of intervention; thematic areas; activities of recipients; types of expenditures covered; types of follow-up; gender perspective; and country.

5.1. *Types of intervention*

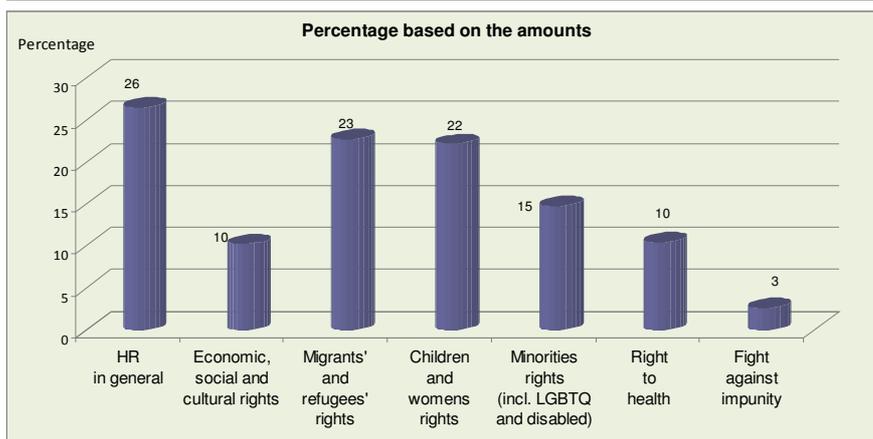
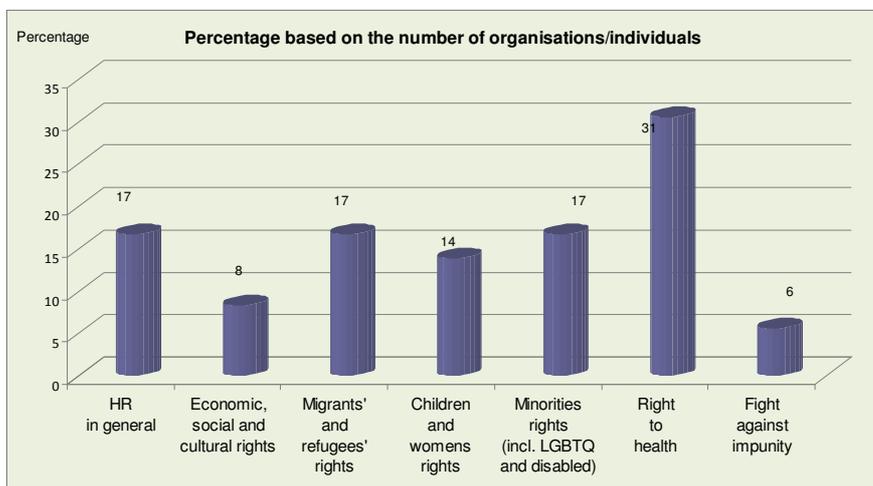
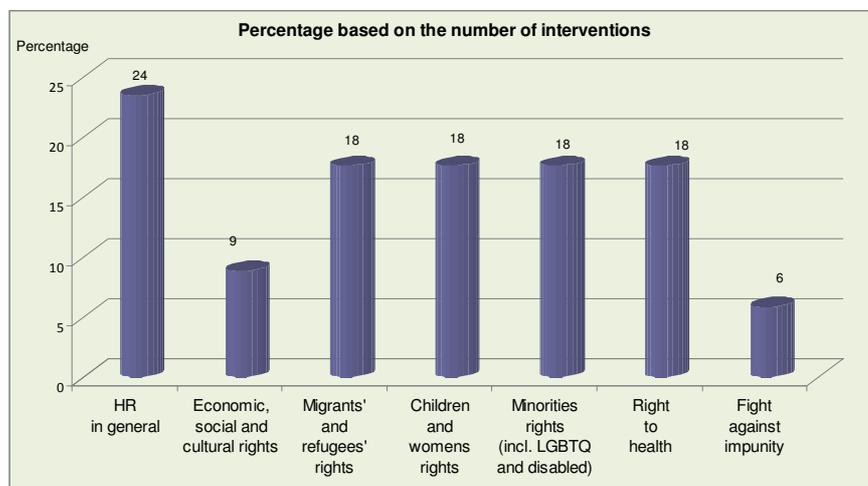


The percentage distribution of urgent and strategic interventions remained relatively unchanged from last year.

Strategic interventions represent two thirds of all interventions by the Foundation, mainly because of the desire of many independent human rights groups and organisations to put their operations on a more professional footing and to strengthen their prospects for pursuing their activities. Few donors give priority to the operating and management costs of these organisations, even though they are an essential condition to the effective implementation of their programmes and strategies over the longer term.

While the amounts of urgent actions are lower (EUR 4,600, on average) than those of strategic interventions (an average of EUR 12,000), urgent interventions play a particularly important role in the eyes of the EMHRF because they essentially target defenders facing precarious conditions in countries defined as priority by the Foundation.

5.2. Thematic areas²⁰



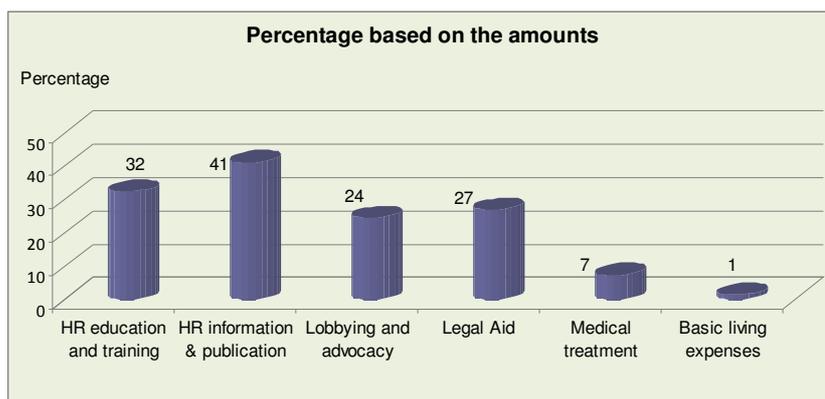
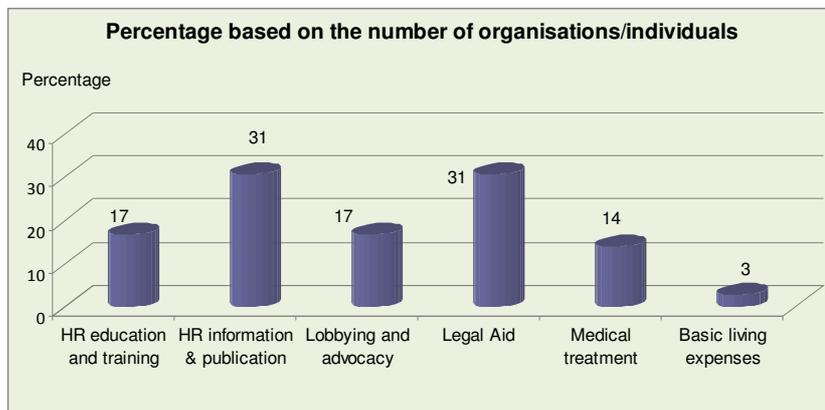
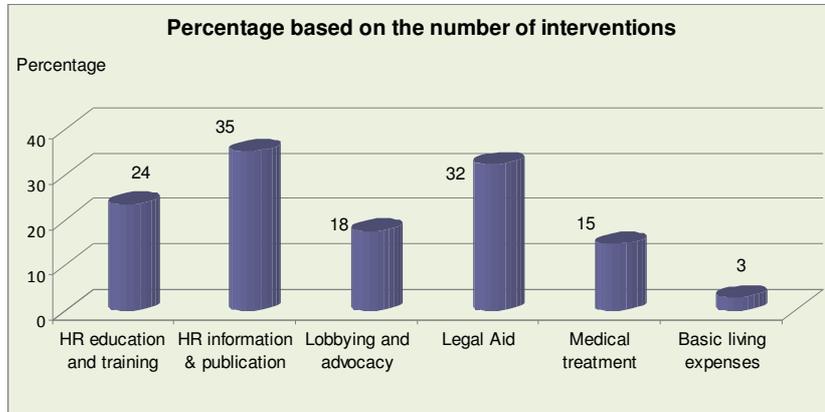
In its 2009 interventions, the EMHRF paid special attention to strengthening the protection of the rights of groups seen as particularly vulnerable (women and children, migrants and refugees, minorities, including LGBTQ and persons with disabilities), without diminishing in any way the importance given to the promotion of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights in countries of the region where conditions are especially difficult.

A comparison with 2008 data shows an increase in the number of actions designed to promote and protect the rights of migrants and refugees in the southern and eastern Mediterranean (8.5% increase) and of minorities (15% increase).

The contrast between the percentage of recipients and the amounts of the interventions under 'right to health' is explained by the fact that several defenders received medical treatments that were relatively less costly.

²⁰ Some grants essentially belong to several thematic areas at once, and these grants are included under all the respective thematic areas, in order to keep the overall picture as appropriate and relevant as possible. This approach means that the total percentage of all thematic areas might exceed 100.

5.3. Activities of recipients²¹



The activities pursued by recipients of EMHRF funding are very diversified, and only a significant portion is represented in the graphs on this page.

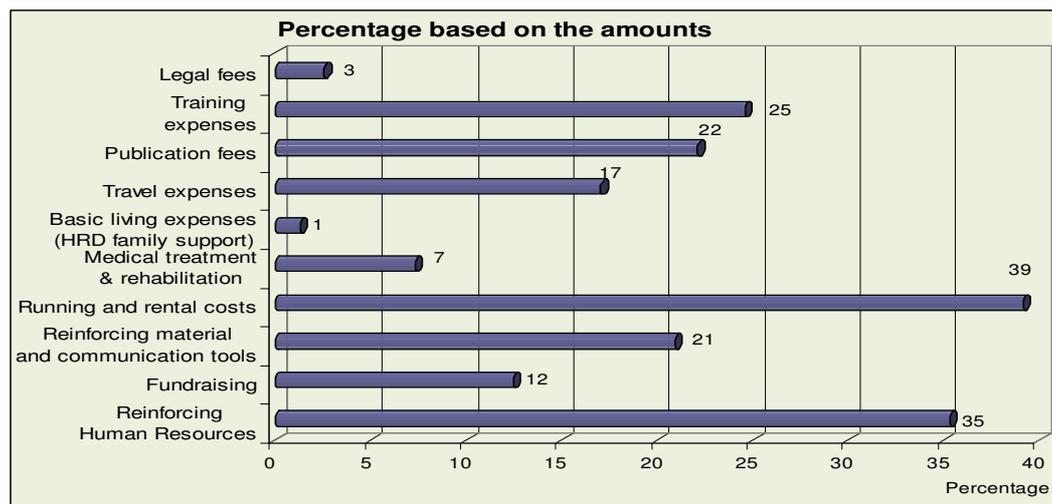
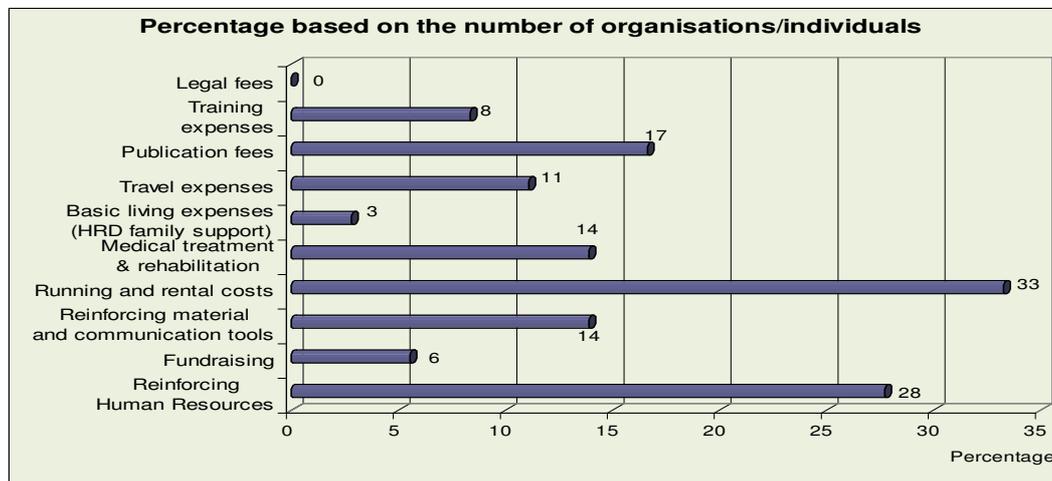
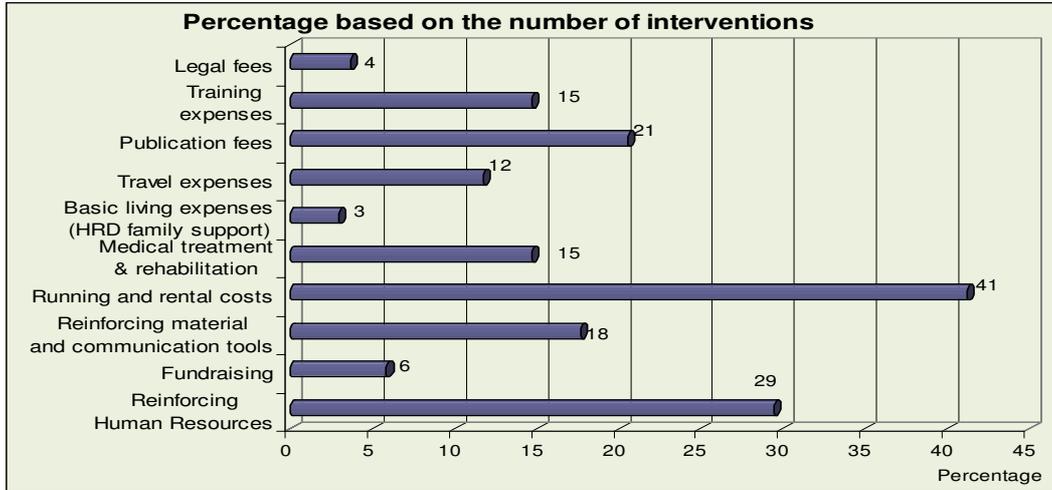
Information, publishing, legal aid and human rights education and training are the main activities pursued by recipients, whether measured by the number or by the amounts of the Foundation's interventions.

To enable them to strengthen their capacities as well as the visibility of their activities over the medium and long term, the EMHRF essentially supported expenditures linked to the operation of independent NGOs - that is, operating and rental costs, and costs associated with human and physical resources.

The higher percentages displayed for human rights education and training are explained mainly by the high number of final recipients. About 40 young NGO members took part in training sessions on relevant human rights instruments and mechanisms, on the development of communications tools and on project management, that were given by recipients of the Foundation's support in 2009.

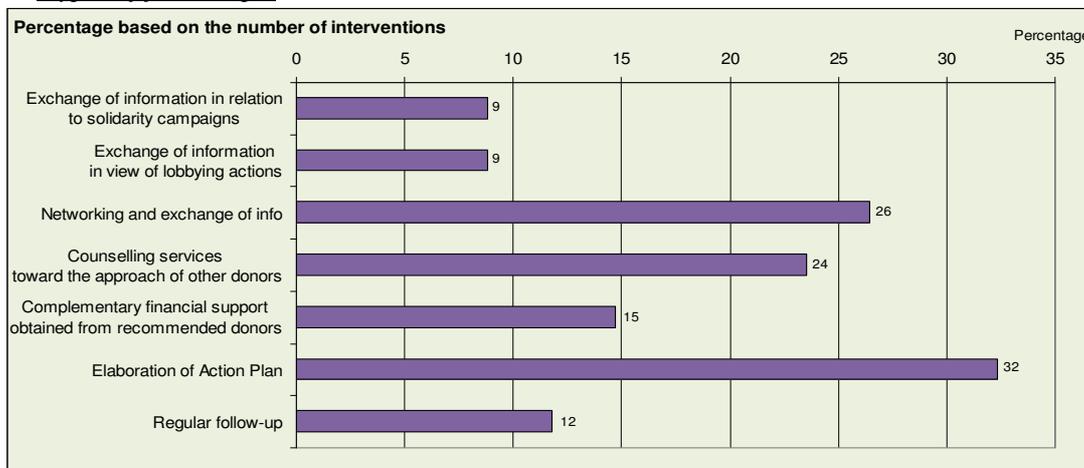
²¹ Some grants essentially cover several activities implemented by the recipients at once, and these grants are included under all the respective activities, in order to keep the overall picture as appropriate and relevant as possible. This approach means that the total percentage of all activities might exceed 100.

5.4. *Types of expenditures covered*²²



²² Some grants essentially aim at reimbursing several types of expenditure at once, and these grants are included under all the respective types of expenditure, in order to keep the overall picture as appropriate and relevant as possible. This approach means that the total percentage of all types of expenditure might exceed 100.

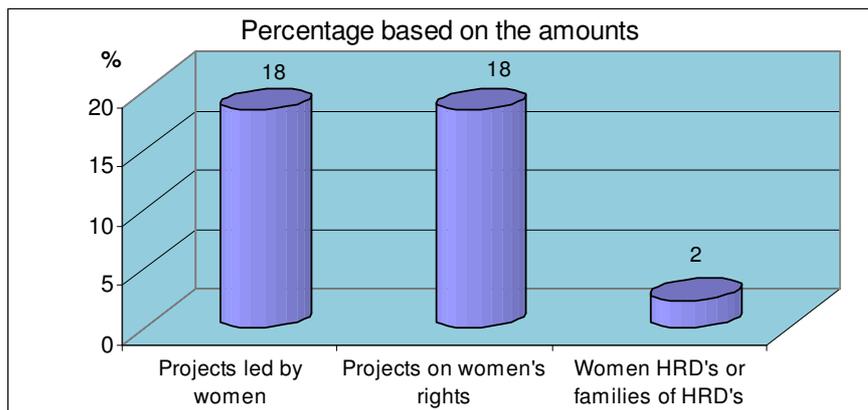
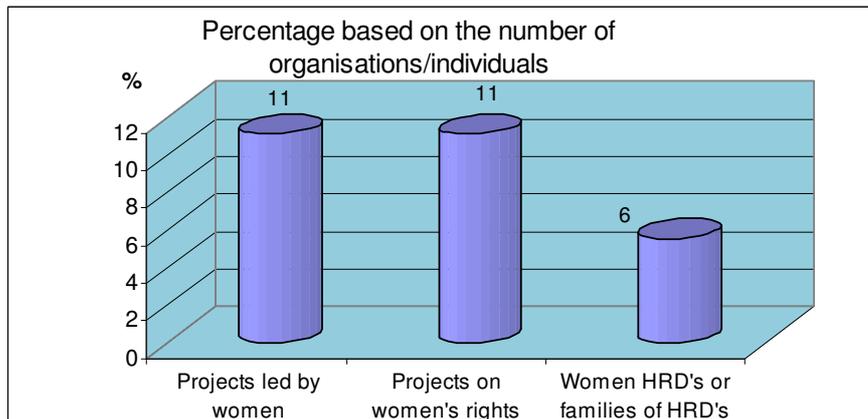
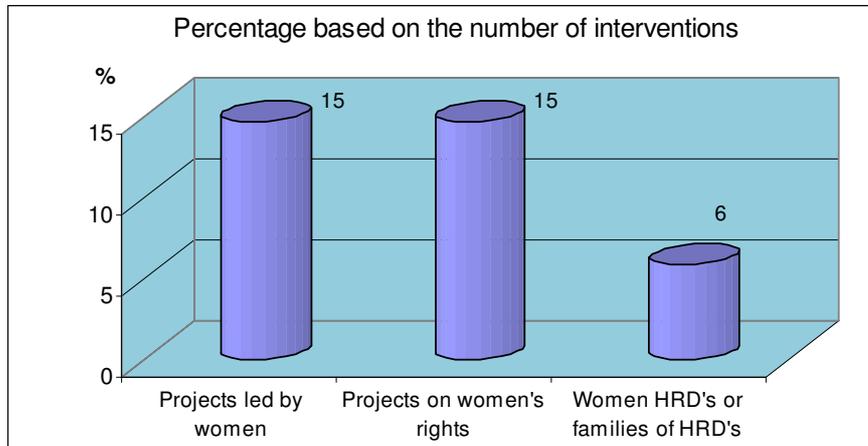
5.5. *Types of follow-up*²³



In its capacity as intermediary and advisor to its recipients, the Foundation sought primarily to follow up on the development of yearly or multiyear plans, on strengthened networking activities and information sharing, and on the extent to which other potential donors were approached during the year 2009.

²³ For some grants, the EMHRF might carry out several types of follow-up at once, and these grants are included under all the respective types of follow-up in order to keep the overall picture as appropriate and relevant as possible. This approach means that the total percentage of all types of follow-up might exceed 100.

5.6. Gender²⁴



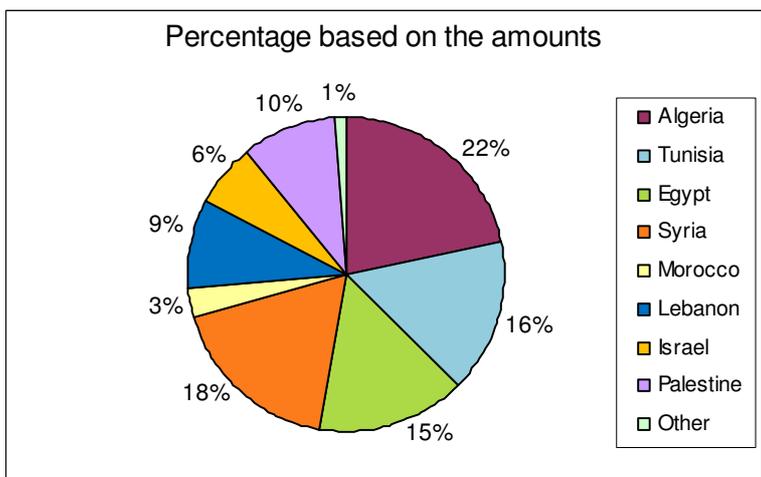
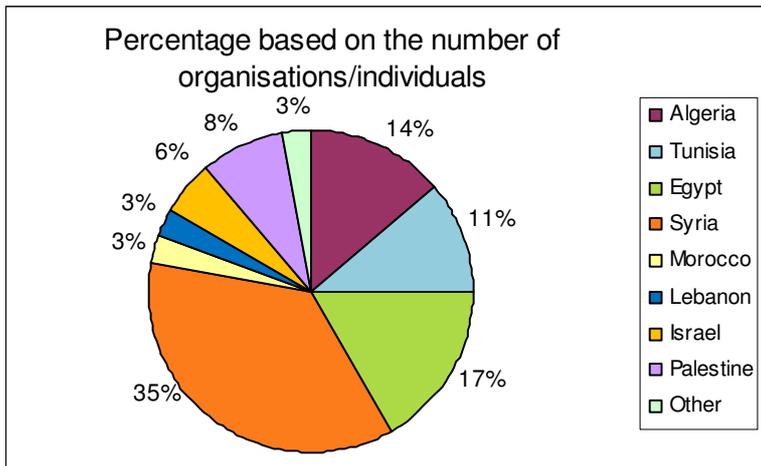
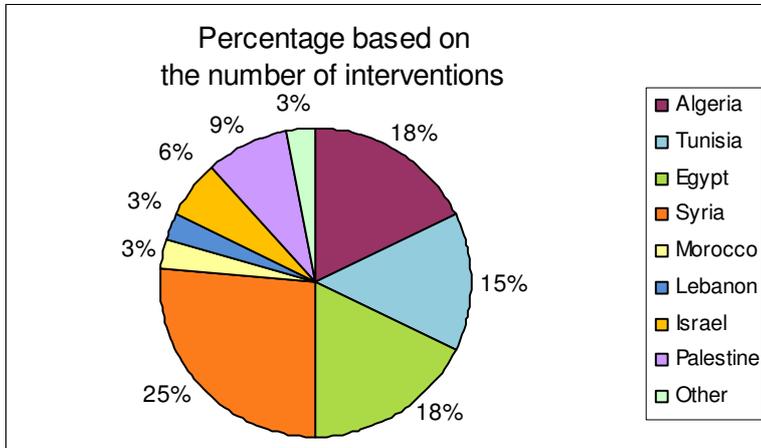
Gender issues are an integral part of the EMHRF's intervention strategy.

Because women's specific situation and their role in defending human rights require special attention, the Foundation has given a degree of priority to projects dealing specifically with gender issues and with strengthening women's involvement and leadership as defenders. The proportion of interventions related to gender issues remains unchanged from last year.

The notable reduction, relative to 2008, in the support granted to individual women defenders and to defender's families, which consist primarily of women and children, is explained by the fact that while the Foundation's support was ongoing in previous years, it did not need to be renewed in 2009.

²⁴ Several grants aimed at reinforcing both the leadership of women defenders and projects on women's rights at the same time. Therefore, these grants are included under both categories in order to keep the overall picture as appropriate and relevant as possible.

5.7. Countries



In light of broad political trends at the national and international levels, the year 2009 highlighted once again the continuous needs expressed by defenders active in Syria, Egypt, Algeria and Tunisia.

Independent NGOs in those countries are either unable to receive legal recognition or can do so only with difficulty, and thus have limited access to national or international funding sources. As a result, they have only limited scope in their operations or in their prospects for pursuing their activities over the long term. For these reasons, the Foundation has continued to give priority to these countries in its interventions in 2009.

There was an increase in the support given to Palestinian and Israeli defenders compared to last year, which is mainly due to the deterioration of the human rights situation. The category 'Other' refers to Arab defender organisations operating mainly outside the region whose activities nonetheless have repercussions on the human rights situation in the EMHRF's countries of intervention.

6. Organisational Matters

6.1. *External evaluation, 2005-2008*

In 2009, the Foundation completed the first external evaluation of its activities during the years 2005-2008. This promising assessment, commissioned by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), in partnership with the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) and the Foreign Ministry of the Netherlands, and conducted by the consultancy company COWI A/S, showed, among other things, that the immediate risk facing defenders had diminished when they had received urgent funding and that those who had received non-urgent funding had seen their visibility and their activities increase in the region. The evaluation also showed that the Foundation is uniquely placed “to provide grants to human rights defenders and human rights organisations in the Middle East and North Africa, because it is well informed about the human rights situation in the region and the consequences for human rights defenders” and “has developed a very credible grant giving” profile and mechanism.

“Because of the human rights situation in the region, urgent and non-urgent funding remains very relevant for human rights defenders and human rights organisations in the region. Urgent funding is relevant because it can be provided in a quick and secure manner. Non-urgent funding is relevant because it provides funding to newly formed human rights organisations addressing human rights issues which are sensitive in the human rights context, and reaching people who otherwise would not be reached”.²⁵

With regard to the implementation of the main recommendations made by the external consultants, in January 2010 the Foundation developed a database that includes information on applicants and recipients, as well as on the results that the latter were able to achieve thanks to the grants they received. The EMHRF has also revised the logical framework of its action by adding verifiable quantitative and qualitative indicators. In early 2009, the Board undertook to develop strategic intervention documents relating to its priority countries - Syria, Tunisia, Algeria and Egypt - based on the situation of defenders and on the Foundation’s experience in recent years. And last, the Secretariat is developing simple, standardised tools to facilitate accountability on the part of recipients. These tools should be finalised during the current year (2010).

6.2. *Partnerships and fundraising*

In 2009, the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders enjoyed the confidence of, and received generous contributions from, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the European Commission through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), the Foreign Ministry of the Netherlands, the Open Society Institute (OSI) Foundation and other small private funds.

The Foundation also sought to diversify its funding sources in an effort to secure adequate resources to pursue and develop its activities in light of the regional context. The Foundation held several meetings with representatives of the French Foreign Ministry and, based on their suggestions, submitted a request to that ministry that, unfortunately, did not produce the desired outcome.

²⁵ COWI A/S, *External Evaluation of EMHRF, 2005-2008, Final Report*, December 2009. The executive summary of the report can be found at: <http://www.emhrf.org/usr/00000003/00000164.pdf>

The Foundation toured the United States and Canada on 15-22 June 2009 and took part in meetings of strategic importance²⁶ not only to meet donor institutions but also to promote its activities, its mission and its goals through meetings with NGOs, research institutes, foundations, and representatives of the Arab communities in Canada and the United States, as well as personalities. The results of these meetings were especially favourable, strengthening opportunities for cooperation with more than 15 partners in the area of financial and political support to human rights defenders in the southern Mediterranean, and raising the possibility that the EMHRF might receive support for its activities from a few private foundations. Based on these meetings, the Board has decided to register the Foundation as a ‘charitable organisation’ under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code, as this will enhance its chances of obtaining funding support from private American foundations. To that end, it has signed an agreement to establish an ‘American Friends’ Fund with KBFUS (King Baudouin Foundation United States), which will act as the EMHRF’s agent for taxation purposes.

Finally, the Board believes it is particularly important for the Foundation to expand its involvement in foundation networks operating in Europe, North America and the Middle East in order to share experiences and strengthen cooperation in support of human rights defenders in the region. In that context, the EMHRF attended an event organised by the Arab Foundation Forum (AFF), a recently established platform for dialogue among Arab foundations, and has decided to apply for membership,²⁷ primarily to develop the Foundation’s visibility and profile as a Euro-Arab donor, to benefit from networking opportunities and to raise awareness about human rights issues. And last, the Foundation remains an associate member of the European Foundation Centre (EFC),²⁸ an international association of foundations that seeks, among other things, to foster the sharing of information and cooperation among foundations in Europe and beyond.

6.3. Information and communication

In 2009, the EMHRF maintained its confidentiality policy regarding most of the information relating to the beneficiaries of its funding. This policy was instituted and has been maintained because of the serious risks facing the activities and individuals involved in funding requests, as well as the recipients and other human rights defenders in the region. At the same time, the Foundation ensures the transparency of its activities by providing comprehensive information to the major donors contributing to its interventions and activities in support of human rights organisations, groups and defenders in the region.

The Foundation has regularly updated and expanded its website, providing clear explanations about the submission of urgent and standard funding requests, as well as the deadlines for submissions, in the Foundation’s three working languages (English, Arabic and French), in order to make its basic data and documents accessible to all: <http://www.emhrf.org/>.

The EMHRF has also taken steps to guarantee the security and safety of communications and consultations between the Secretariat and the Board, and to provide secure access to the archives,

²⁶ General Assembly of the European Foundation Centre (EFC), Rome, 13-14 May 2009; Conference of the International Human Rights Funders Group (IHRFG), New York, 13-14 July 2009.

²⁷ The Arab Foundations forum is a pan-Arab association of foundations which seeks to strengthen dialogue, networking, learning and cooperation among its members and with partners, with a view to strengthening the ability of Arab philanthropic bodies to implement their vision. The Forum currently serves as a platform for dialogue among 16 foundations in the region and beyond.

²⁸ International association of public benefit foundations and corporate funders dedicated to creating a ‘foundation-friendly’ legal and fiscal environment, documenting their field of intervention, strengthen the industry infrastructure and promote cooperation among foundations and with other actors in Europe and beyond.

which might eventually be extended to other partners in countries where conditions are difficult. In July 2009, the Secretariat conducted an extensive study to set up a secure web page and contacted a number of firms specialised in the development of secure means of communications and websites. Among the many bids received, the winner was submitted by an international design and information technology firm specialising in design and use services, CMS solutions, e-commerce, intranet and extranet, visual identity, programming and development, project management, referencing and monitoring, with offices in Sweden, the United Kingdom and Denmark. The selection was made after an evaluation of the quality/price ratio, with the level of security being a prerequisite in the Foundation's selection process. The secure web page should become operational during 2010.

6.4. Risk analysis and viability

The main risks associated with granting financial assistance to human rights defenders in countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean, as identified by the Foundation, are the following:

- ***The risk that recipients of EMHRF funding will be the target of increased repression.*** The support granted by the Foundation has not, so far, led to physical, legal or psychological pressures on defenders because the principle of confidentiality has been strictly applied in the review of funding requests, in the implementation of support decisions and in the actual transfer of funds. Confidentiality rules are also applied to all the documents that are made public, which abstain from mentioning any names or amounts.²⁹ Communications with members are conducted through secure, encrypted channels. At the same time, the Foundation provides information to its major donors on all its activities, honouring the principle of transparency with the utmost vigilance.
- ***The risk that the funds will be blocked or intercepted by a third party.*** The results so far have been relatively satisfactory, with one exception: in early 2010, the funds that were intended to support the learning and documentation services of the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women (ATFD) as part of the Ilhem Marzouki Women's University were arbitrarily intercepted. The Foundation responded immediately and raised the issue with several bodies, including the European Parliament and the European Commission. This matter is currently being reviewed by the European Commission. The Foundation's Board and Secretariat have also asked for the support from the Danish bank and hope that the matter will be resolved very shortly. Vigilance in this area remains constant; a number of precautionary measures have been taken and details have been obtained from the defender, both during and after this incident.
- ***The risk that Foundation interventions could unwittingly have destabilising effects within civil society (intensification of rivalries, disinformation, etc.) or that the funds granted may be misused or used fraudulently (embezzlement, corruption, etc.).*** To date, these risks have been avoided but the potential for such risks is under constant monitoring. At the same time, the total amounts allocated to projects are such that they are an important limit on any possibility of misuse. The rigorous assessment conducted before a decision is made and the moral commitment made by recipients also tends to limit such risks. Beneficiaries must also follow a number of steps to ensure accountability and the Foundation monitors recipients on an ongoing basis. The Foundation reserves the

²⁹ Except in one exceptional case, mentioned below, where public disclosure has been necessary in order to raise the issue at the States level.

right to require that the funds granted be reimbursed should the goal of a contract not be met.

The sustainability of the Foundation's work is based on the following elements:

- Human rights defenders in the region need to have access to quick, flexible, targeted interventions that have a significant impact on their ability to pursue their activities.
- Due to the structure of its Board, comprising leaders within several international (FIDH, ICTJ) and regional (EMHRN, CIHRS) organisations as well as experts recognized by the region, the Foundation has direct access to human rights organisations and defenders of the region, and is thus in a position to take advantage of a unique, highly qualified source of knowledge and quickly obtain the detailed and reliable information it needs to pursue its work, thus improving the quality and targeting of its interventions.
- The Foundation remains in regular contact with its partners and with civil society in the context of its follow-up activities and its regular visits to the region, and can thus respond to changes in local and regional circumstances and to the needs expressed by defenders.
- The Foundation focuses its attention on a clearly circumscribed region, which enables it to develop a specific profile and to be a trustworthy actor in its field of action.
- The Foundation encourages the much-needed participation and cooperation of other national, regional and international organisations in efforts to provide long-term institutional support to defenders.
- The Foundation carefully measures the risks involved in providing low-level funding to defenders at risk, small emerging NGOs and innovative activities.
- Thanks to its close contacts with other actors and organisations in civil society, the Foundation is in a position to provide advice and act as an intermediary between defenders and international donors when a funding request appears to be such that it could be supported by another organisation.
- The Foundation actively seeks to diversify its sources of secure funding in the pursuit of its activities in support of human rights defenders in the region.
- Last but not least, the right and freedom of association is a central component of the Foundation's intervention strategy.

6.5. Internal governance

The composition of the Board remained unchanged in 2009. The Board consists of nine members, who contribute to its work on a volunteer basis.

In the wake of amendments to the EMHRN statutes that were adopted during the Network's General Assembly in December 2008, the Foundation has taken steps to ensure that the meeting of its Council of Representatives, which is made up of regular, associate and honorary members of the EMHRN, will coincide with the Network's General Assembly in the future. The EMHRF statutes were amended in 2009 to reflect that change, and the amendment was approved by the Danish Civil Affairs Agency³⁰. According to the revised statutes, adopted by the Foundation's Board in October 2009, Board members will be nominated for six years from now on, instead of four years. Membership renewal, which is by cooptation, will be presented at the next EMHRN General Assembly in 2011.

³⁰ The EMHRF being registered under the Danish law on foundations, any legal issue related to the object and purpose of the Foundation must be referred to the Danish Civil Affairs Agency (*Civilstyrelsen*).

The staff of the Foundation's Secretariat comprised the following persons in 2009:

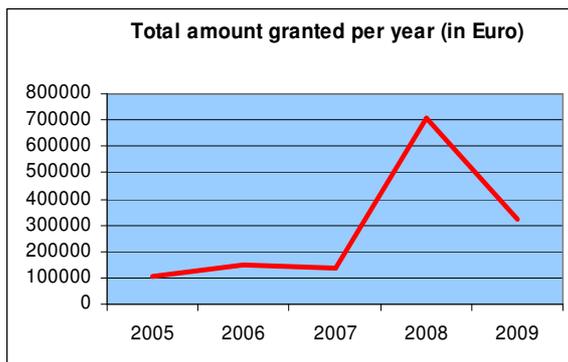
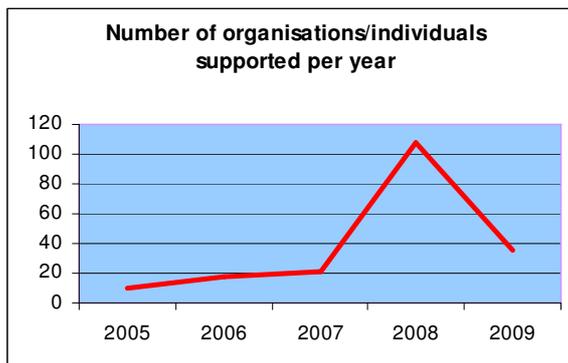
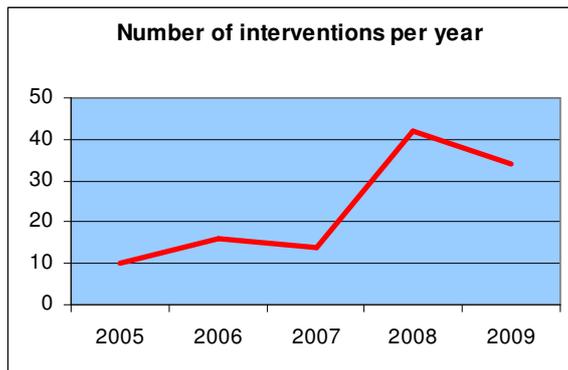
- Anne-Sophie Schaeffer (MA in international public law), employed on a full-time basis as program manager based in Copenhagen;
- Katrine Høybye Frederiksen (MA in foreign languages), employed as a full-time administrative secretary based in Copenhagen;
- Chafia Alliche (Student on foreign languages and international development), employed on a part-time basis as an assistant until November; Roger Jalkh (MA in communications), employed as an intern on a full-time basis since July 2009, based in Copenhagen.

The Foundation also benefited from accounting and IT services on a temporary basis. The audit of the Foundation's accounts was performed by *Deloitte*, Copenhagen.

Appendix 1: Overview of EMHRF Interventions 2005-2009

During the period 2005-2009, the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders (EMHRF) allocated 123 grants in support of 181 individual defenders and organisations in the South-Mediterranean region 2009. The total amount of financial assistance provided by the Foundation was 1.5 million Euros³¹.

The evolution of the Foundation's grants is illustrated in the following graphs:



These graphs show substantial change in the Foundation's support in 2008 – an increase that is explained mainly by a worsening of the human rights situation in the region, especially in the countries targeted for priority intervention by the Foundation.

The change in the distribution of support between 2005 and 2009 is also associated with the specific profile developed by the Foundation in the past five years. Thanks to that profile, the Foundation is now recognised as a major source of support by human rights defenders in this region.

A reduction in the total amount of support and in the number of recipients can be noted in 2009. This reduction is mainly due to the fact that many grants that were made in late 2008 were still in effect in 2009.

While remaining flexible with regard to the needs that are identified, the Foundation anticipates making a minimum of about 40 grants per year in the future.

³¹ Of approximately 600 information and funding requests received by the Foundation during the period 2005-2009, about 20 percent received financial assistance. Note that members of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) represent only 25 percent of the ultimate recipients of EMHRF support because they generally have greater scope for networking and fundraising.

1. Narrative Overview

The support provided by the Foundation to defenders in the southern Mediterranean region can be divided into three broad categories.

a) **Emergency financial assistance to defenders and NGOs in difficulty or at risk**

41 percent of the Foundation's interventions consisted of short-term grants provided in a quick, tangible, and discreet manner, at critical junctures, to 109 human rights defenders to enable them to overcome difficult circumstances and/or reinforce the visibility of their action and strengthen their long-term prospects for pursuing their activities.

1. The Foundation supported defenders and their families who were the target of psychological harassment and arbitrary prosecutions, in order to help them overcome these difficulties.
2. The Foundation supported defenders whose lives were at risk because of serious health problems, in order to allow them to receive, in their own country or abroad, the medical treatment and medications they needed. This support was granted because they were the victims of egregious violations of their human rights and/or because they were unable to afford the cost of treatment as a result of their ongoing commitment to defending human rights.
3. The Foundation supported human rights organisations that were targeted by the authorities (by denying or withholding legal recognition, freezing bank accounts, etc.) or suddenly faced with unforeseen financial or administrative difficulties, in order to enable them to adjust their strategies in the time required to stabilise their status.
4. Finally, the Foundation supported projects whose success depended closely on a timely intervention in order to increase the visibility of the recipients' activities and enhance their prospects for pursuing these activities. The grants were made because the applicants could not easily obtain the needed funding from other donors in adequate conditions of timeliness and safety.

b) **Strategic financial assistance aimed at building the capacities of defenders and independent NGOs to help them implement programmes and projects dealing with subjects that are innovative or sensitive, given the regional context**

Strategic interventions, which form the bulk of the Foundation's support (59 percent), were essentially aimed at strengthening the visibility, human resources, and management capabilities of 72 recipients, to allow them to develop structures or implement innovative and sensitive activities aimed at the protection and promotion of human rights in the region.

For example, strategic support was provided for the following:

- **Payment of rental and equipment costs** associated with the establishment of new structures and the enhanced visibility of the activities of human rights groups and organisations, both nationally and internationally;
- **Payment of travel costs** associated with observation missions and the publication of reports on human rights violations, to raise the awareness of NGOs and governmental and intergovernmental actors about these violations at the national, regional, and international levels;

- ***Recruit the staff needed*** for the effective management of projects focused on defending human rights (legal or other advisor, project manager, accountant, etc.) and for developing the networking and fundraising skills of groups working on sensitive issues;
- ***Training of young NGO actors*** on relevant human rights protection instruments and mechanisms, on the development of communications tools, and on project management.

In particular, the Foundation provided support to defenders who wished to establish and expand projects dealing with priority and sensitive issues within the regional context, or targeting groups that are seen as being particularly vulnerable or needing special assistance.

Special attention was paid to the following thematic issues in the context of the review of ordinary requests submitted to the Board:

- Protecting the rights of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers;
- Protecting the rights of women and enhancing their leadership;
- Documenting human rights violations in general, and fighting impunity;
- Protecting the rights of minorities;
- Protecting economic, social and cultural rights;
- Fighting homophobia and protecting LGBTQ rights.

c) Non-financial support as a follow-up to the situation of defenders to enable them to improve their long-term prospects for pursuing their activities

One of the main goals sought by the Foundation in its interventions is to ensure that defenders in the region can improve their prospects for continuing their work over the medium and long term. To that end, it has acted as an advisor to its recipients and encouraged them to coordinate their activities with a number of regional and international partners in order to ensure that defenders and their families receive effective support.

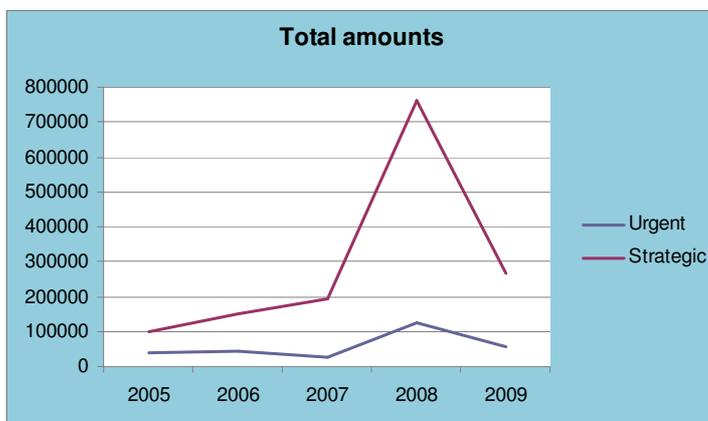
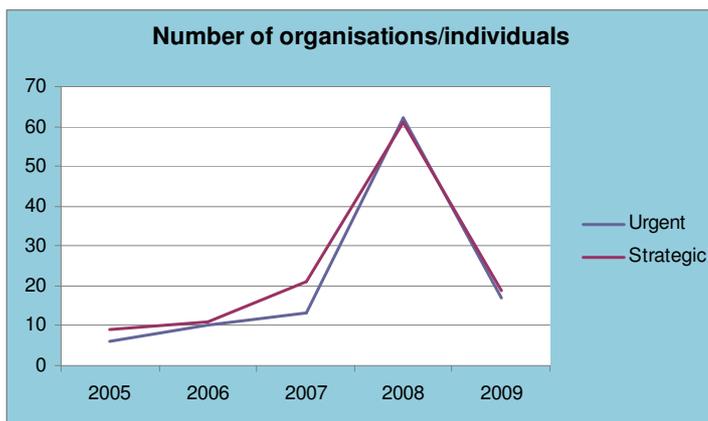
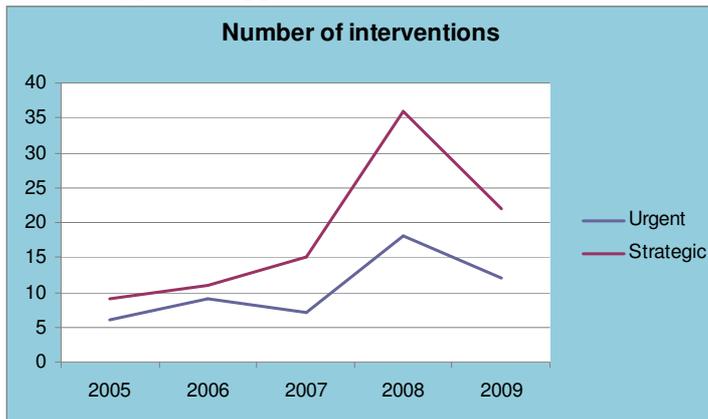
Here are some major aspects of the Foundation's follow-up activities:

- Helping to ensure that other national, regional, or international organisations or foundations whose mandates complement that of the EMHRF will assume additional costs associated with the needs expressed by defenders.
- Coordinating its activities with a number of regional and international organisations in the context of their solidarity interventions.
- Advising organisations on the appropriate approaches that should be adopted in the context of project methodology and fundraising from outside sources. As part of this role, the Foundation has, in a number of cases, provided a list of potential donors and assisted in the presentation of funding requests. The Foundation has also encouraged the development of intervention strategies backed by a plan of action in the area of fundraising.
- Encouraging contacts between a number of groups and organisations and other national organisations involved in similar projects in the same country or in other countries of the region, or with networks that are active at the national, regional, or international level. Such contacts are intended to enable them to share information and experiences, to explore the potential for synergies and coordinated action, and thus to benefit from non-financial support that will enhance the impact and sustainability of their activities.

2. Quantitative Overview

To facilitate an understanding of the Foundation's activities during the period 2005-2009, please find in the next few pages a series of graphs dealing with the following subjects: types of support, thematic focus, activities of recipients, types of expenditures, gender, and countries.

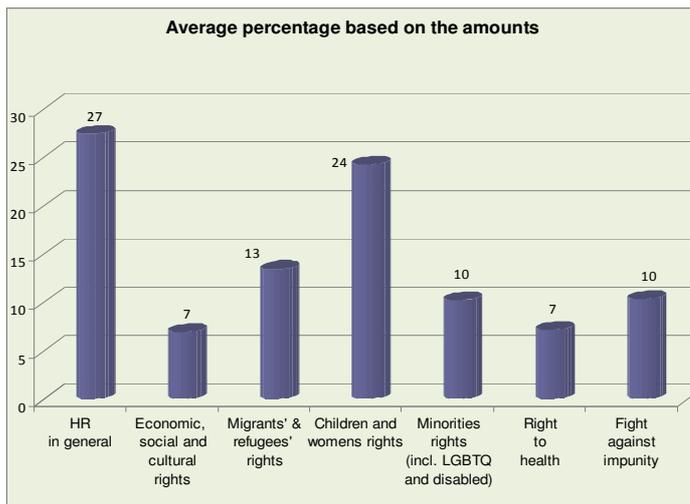
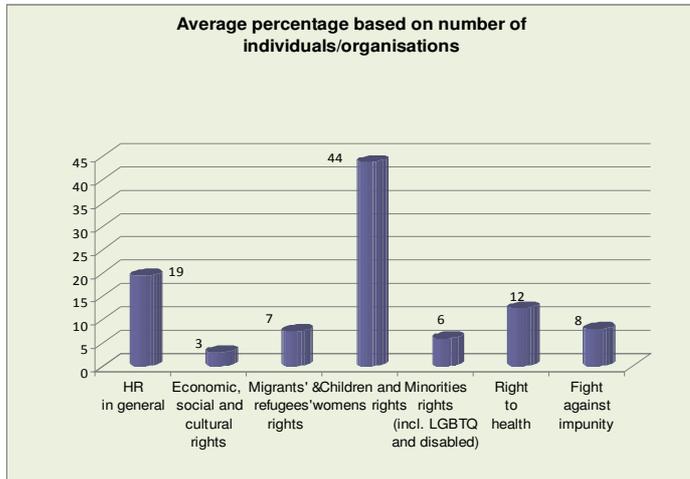
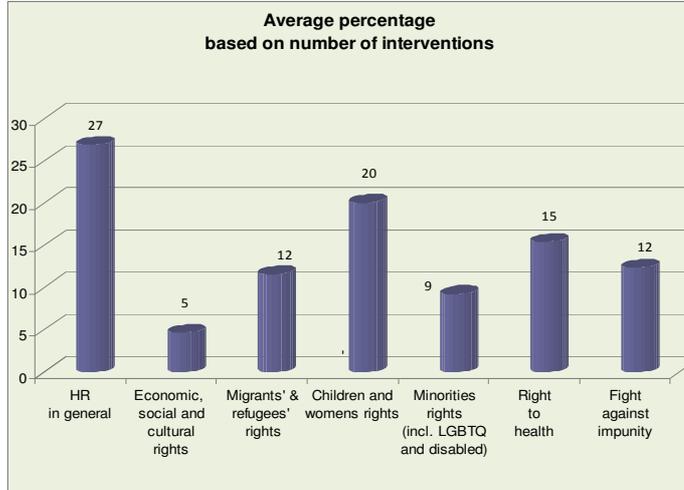
2.1. Types of Support



These graphs serve to illustrate the importance the Foundation attaches to support aimed at strengthening the human and physical resources of independent civil society organisations. Most defenders work on a volunteer basis, although a few receive ad hoc funding for specific projects. However, the requests received by the Foundation reveal a crucial lack of the resources that would enable defenders to put the independent organisations within which they work on a more professional and sustainable footing in order to enhance their visibility and their longer-term prospects.

The substantial increase in the number of defenders receiving emergency support in 2008 was mainly due to the severe repression targeting groups that called for the establishment of a democratic system that respects the rights of citizens, guarantees the freedoms of expression and association, and eliminate discrimination. Despite this trend, the overall amount of emergency interventions remains low because of the low threshold of 5 000 Euros set for each intervention. Small amounts that can be made available quickly are nonetheless essential, because they can have a considerable impact on the defender's physical and psychological ability to pursue his or her work.

2.2. Thematic areas³²

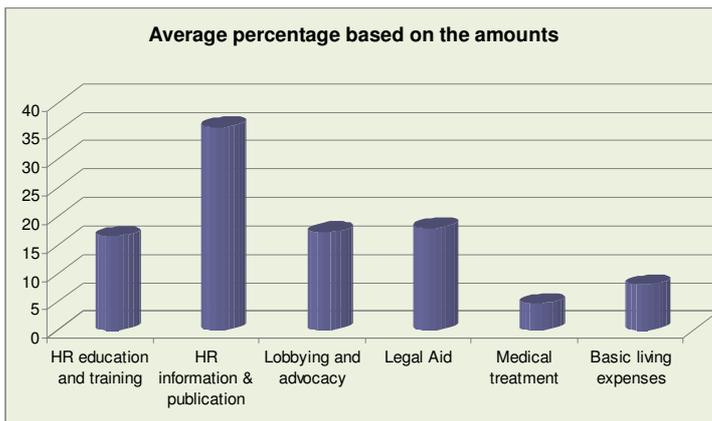
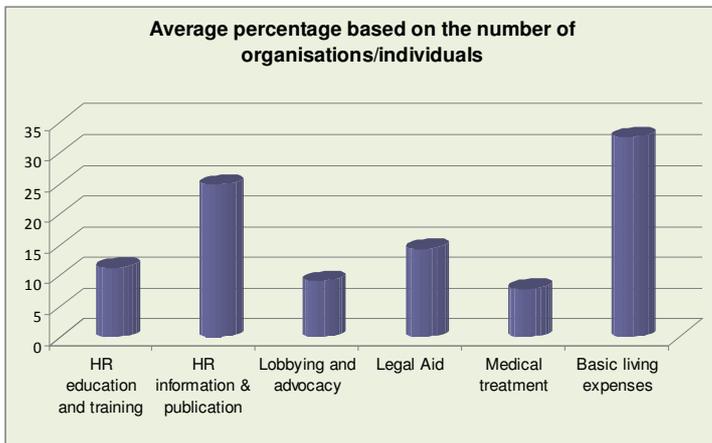
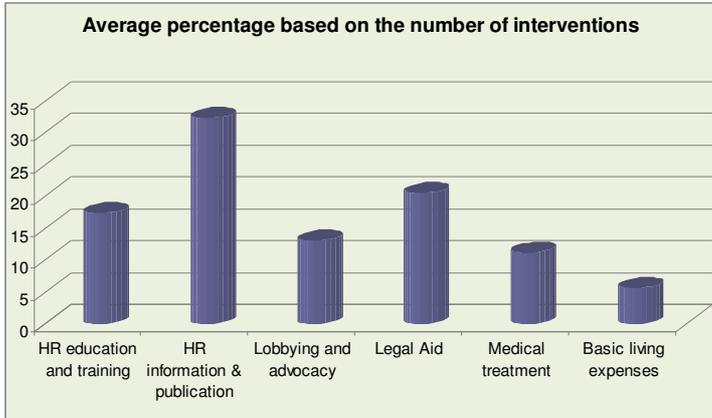


During the period 2005-2009, the Foundation placed special emphasis on greater protection of the rights of groups that are seen as particularly vulnerable because of their specific nature and of their environment (women and children, migrants and refugees, minorities and LGBTQ).

That is not to say that the Foundation has given less importance to more traditional activities associated with supporting and promoting civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights in the region (monitoring and documenting the human rights situation in general and fighting impunity), given the changing environment.

³² Some grants essentially belong to several thematic areas at once, and these grants are included under all the respective thematic areas, in order to keep the overall picture as appropriate and relevant as possible. This approach means that the total percentage of all thematic areas might exceed 100 during the period 2005-2009.

2.3. Activities of Recipients³³



The activities engaged in by recipients of the Foundation's financial assistance are highly diversified. The graphs presented here show only a representative sample of those activities.

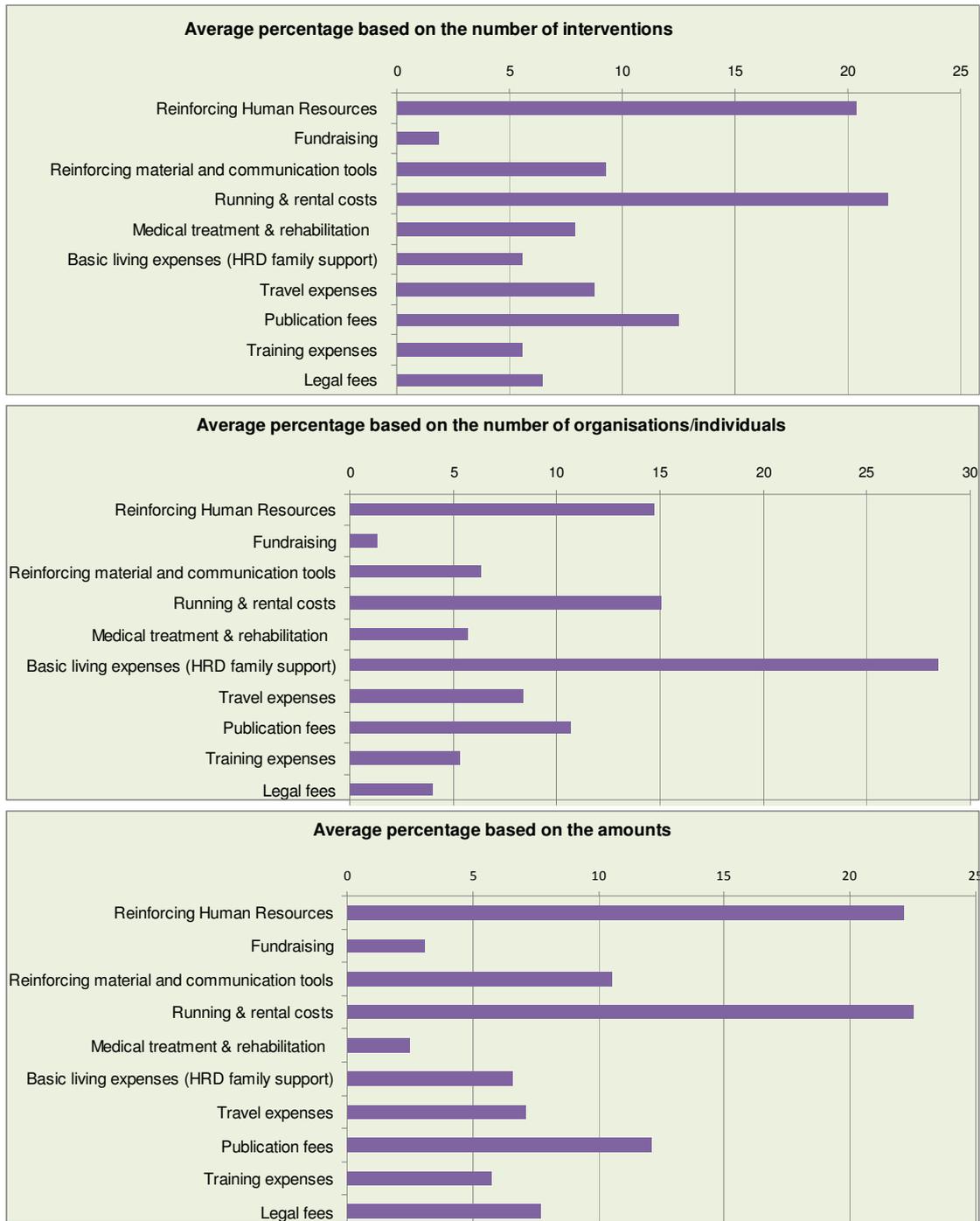
The information and publication functions, as well as legal aid, are the main activities conducted by recipients, whether measured by the number or the amounts of the Foundation's grants.

To help independent NGOs engage in capacity-building and enhance the medium- and long-term visibility of their activities, the Foundation essentially funded their overhead costs, including those associated with office and equipment rentals as well as human and physical resources.

The differences in the percentages for basic living expenses are mainly due to the fact that while the number of beneficiaries is high, the amounts involved represent a relatively small proportion of the total. These support actions by the Foundation nevertheless had strategic importance in its work over the period 2005-2009.

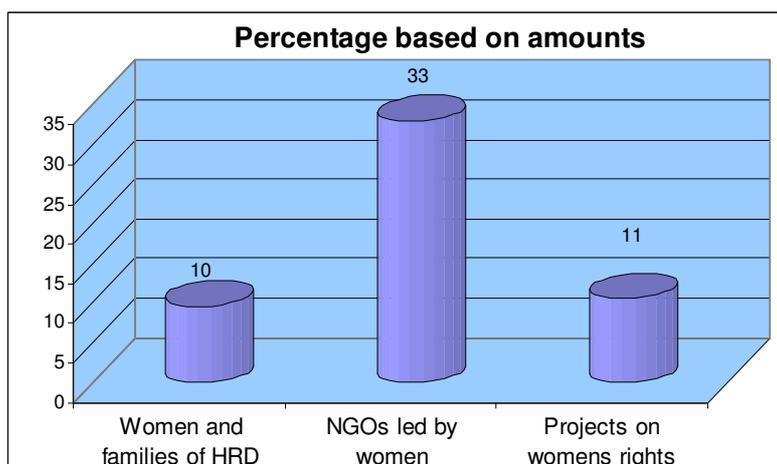
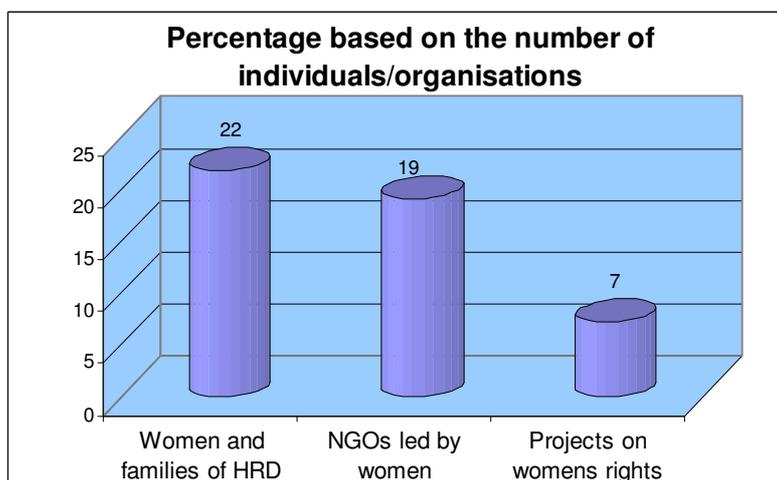
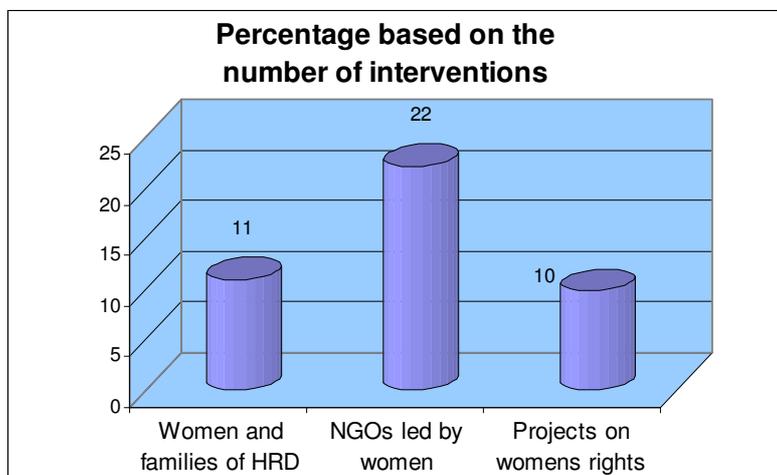
³³ Some grants essentially cover several activities implemented by the recipients at once, and these grants are included under all the respective activities, in order to keep the overall picture as appropriate and relevant as possible. This approach means that the total percentage of all activities might exceed 100 during the period 2005-2009.

2.4. Types of Expenditures³⁴



³⁴ Some grants essentially aim at reimbursing several types of expenditure at once, and these grants are included under all the respective types of expenditure in order to keep the overall picture as appropriate and relevant as possible. This approach means that the total percentage of all types of expenditure might exceed 100 during the period 2005-2009.

2.5. Gender³⁵



The rights and roles of women defenders are an issue that occupies a central place in the Foundation's intervention strategy.

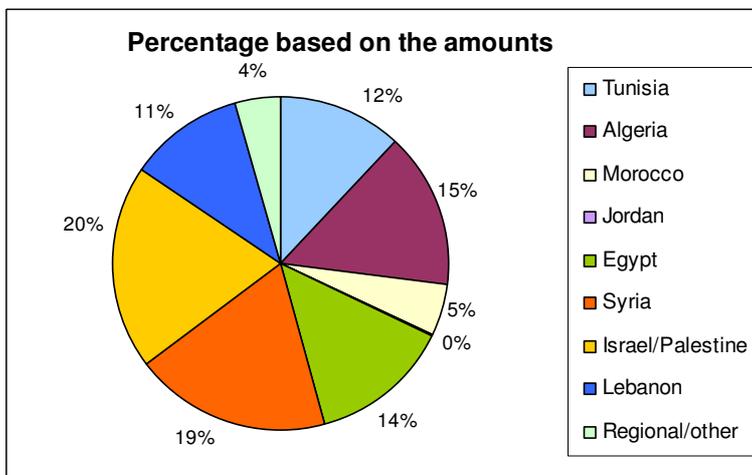
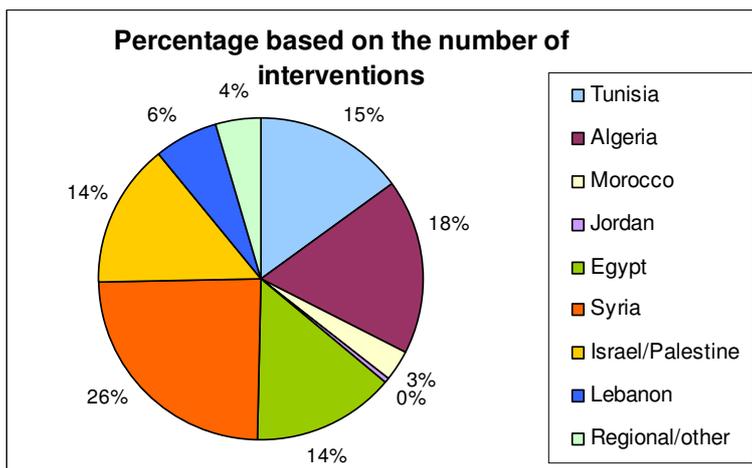
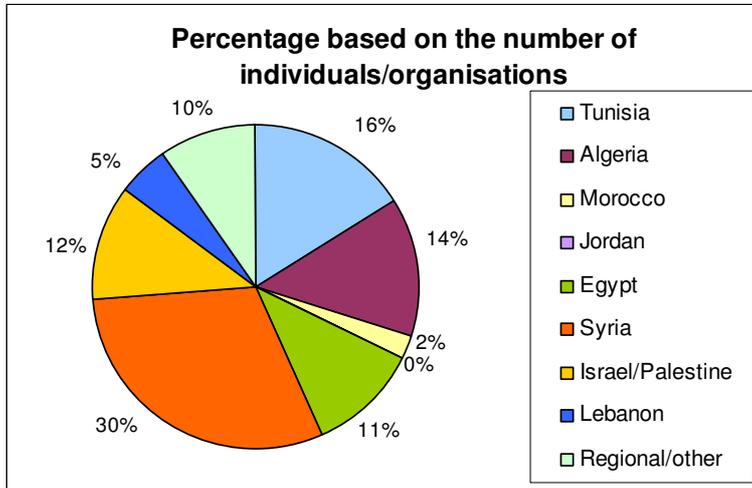
During the period 2005-2009, the Foundation placed special emphasis on reinforcing the involvement of women defenders as essential agents of change in the region. Their enhanced participation and leadership play a critical role in the promotion of social justice, the prevention of violence and respect for women's rights, as well as the systematic gender mainstreaming of programmes focused on the promotion and defence of human rights.

While several countries in the region have improved their respective family codes thanks particularly to continuous efforts by women's rights groups, concerns remain because of the growing tendency of some governments to align themselves on the positions taken by conservative elements in the Islamist movement in an attempt to give a semblance of legitimacy to their regimes.

Thus, the enhanced involvement of women defenders is intimately linked with the challenge of strengthening democracy and human rights in the region.

³⁵ Several grants aimed at reinforcing both the leadership of women defenders and projects on women's rights at the same time. Therefore, these grants are included under both categories in order to keep the overall picture as appropriate and relevant as possible for the period 2005-2009.

2.6. Countries



The funding requests received by the Foundation over the period 2005-2009 reflect broad political trends at the national and international level in the region, as well as the evolution of conflicts with tragic consequences. Independent NGOs are seldom, if ever, allowed to register their activities under the law in Syria, Tunisia, Algeria, and Egypt, and as a result have only limited access to national and international sources of funding. As a consequence, their range of operation is restricted and their prospects for pursuing their activities into the future are also limited. At the same time, the lack of progress in the Middle East peace process, intra-Palestinian conflicts, and the Israeli blockade and war in the Gaza strip have caused an unprecedented humanitarian crisis in the population, which is exacerbated by a context in which human rights violations have become commonplace and remain unpunished.

The Foundation gave a high level of priority to its response to the needs expressed by defenders operating in those environments, based on the level of living standards in those countries (which explains, in particular, the higher volume of grants in favour of defenders active in Palestine and Israel).

The relatively lower number of funding grants given to defenders in Lebanon, Morocco, and Jordan is due to the fact that human rights groups and defenders in those countries have access to other sources of funding available and that civil society organisations relatively have greater scope for action.