



**Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to  
Human Rights Defenders**

# **Activity Report**

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**2015**

**[www.emhrf.org](http://www.emhrf.org)**

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## 1. Introductory Overview

Through over one hundred interventions in 2015, the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders (EMHRF) strengthened its actions to protect and support defenders and civil society actors in the Arab region, thus nurturing their central role in building democratic processes, combatting impunity, and addressing inequalities and other root causes of radicalisation.

**72% of these interventions took place in countries in armed conflict situations, where defenders faced increasing hostility and restrictions of their scope of action**, such as Syria, Libya, Egypt, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. The results are encouraging: about forty defenders, 29% of whom are women, and their families were protected from threats to their lives and safety, and 86% of them have since resumed their work in defence of human rights. Furthermore, the Foundation's partners compiled comprehensive reports documenting grave violations, lodged complaints, and submitted written statements to the United Nations treaty bodies. Over 410 victims of violations were also offered legal assistance and counsel in these countries.

*For example, a group of Libyan defenders set up a network to strengthen coordination efforts from outside Libya and present joint recommendations in the framework of the political dialogue held by the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL). They also supported the UNSMIL and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to produce a report on threats and assaults against Libyan defenders.*

*In Syria, an association has documented 286 cases of enforced disappearances and submitted 50 communications to the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances on behalf of victims' families.*

Moreover, **25% of the Foundation's interventions aimed at strengthening the operational capacities of innovative civil society initiatives in Morocco and Tunisia** that are mainly active in remote areas and benefit vulnerable populations, **to implement constitutional guarantees and address deficiencies in human rights protection**. The results are fruitful: 70% of the Foundation's interventions in Tunisia were made in support of civil society actors in the governorates of Beja, Bizerte, Nabeul, el-Kef, Zaghuan, Kairouan, Kasserine, Sidi Bouzid, Gafsa, Kebili, Medenine et Tataouine, where access to economic and social development as well as rights remains a priority. The Foundation's partners presented analyses and recommendations to amend laws on the status of security forces, the right to access information, freedom of the press and violence against women to executive and legislative authorities in Tunisia and Morocco.

*In Tunisia, for example, fourteen cases of victims from Gafsa governorate were submitted to Tunisia's Truth and Dignity Commission, the official body that is responsible for investigating and prosecuting past crimes, to advocate for the governorate as a whole to be considered as a victim of the past dictatorship.*

*A recently established Moroccan association rented an office space and employed a coordinator to manage its new programmes and develop partnerships to include youth voices in the drafting of public policies. Among other activities, it released a memorandum on the cultural public policies in Morocco in April 2016, in partnership with a specialised UN agency and an international foundation.*

The Foundation has focused its interventions on **civil society actors operating outside capital cities**, who often lack the networks or the experience needed to obtain support from mainstream donors. They made up 61% of the beneficiaries of the support allocated in 2015. The Foundation has also strengthened its support to **youth and women leadership**, which was taken as a key area of focus by a quarter of its partners, given the central role of women and youth in all democratic processes.

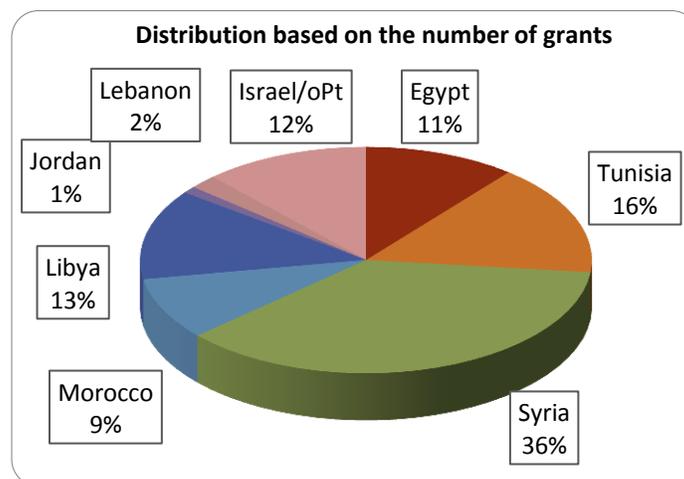
Lastly, the Foundation continued to favour collaboration and exchange with key stakeholders in the fields of protection and support to defenders and non-governmental organisations from the region. Beyond its participation and membership in European and American networks of foundations active in the field of human rights, it has also joined twelve regional and international partners to establish and implement the **European Union Human Rights Defenders Mechanism [ProtectDefenders.eu](http://ProtectDefenders.eu)** to offer a joint response to the risks defenders face and to the shrinking civil society space.

The main areas of the Foundation’s financial and non-financial interventions to support NGOs, groups and individual defenders are outlined in more detail below.

## 2. Direct Support to Human Rights NGOs, Groups and Defenders

The Foundation undertook 101 interventions to support 104 human rights defenders (63 NGOs or groups and 41 individual defenders) who foster, support, protect and monitor respect for human rights in the South-Mediterranean region in 2015.<sup>1</sup> The grants allocated to these defenders totalled over 1.3 million euros.<sup>2</sup>

The following chart shows the overall percentage distribution of grants per country, with Syria remaining at the core of the Foundation’s interventions in 2015:



<sup>1</sup> The Foundation received 421 funding proposals and inquiries from human rights defenders during the year 2015, compared with 512 in the previous year. The majority of the applications received came from Syria, Egypt, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, which accounted for 56 percent of all applications in 2015. Following a thorough due diligence process and in compliance with the principal selection criteria, which can be consulted on the Foundation’s website, the Board granted urgent and flexible support to 24% of applicants. 8% of the beneficiaries of the Foundation’s assistance were EuroMed Rights members.

<sup>2</sup> This amount represents three quarter of the Foundation’s annual budget in 2015. In 2014, the level of intervention reached a little over € 1,4 million.

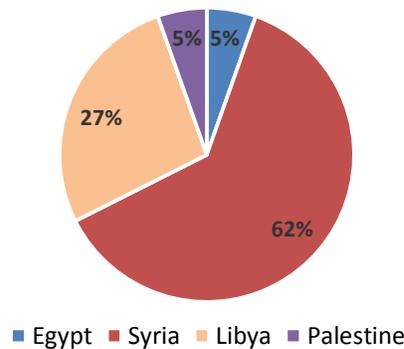
The support provided to defenders in the region can be divided into two broad categories, as set out below.<sup>3</sup>

### **2.1. Urgent interventions to protect individual defenders at risk in highly repressive and volatile contexts**

In 2015, the Foundation granted urgent support to protect 41 individual human rights defenders and their family members at risk because of their work in human rights in the South-Mediterranean region, notably in Syria, Libya, Egypt and Palestine.

The vast majority of these interventions supported Syrian and Libyan human rights defenders due to the continued armed conflicts and widespread abuses they are facing in these countries.

**Distribution of urgent grants per country**



In particular, the Foundation's actions targeted the following situations for emergency support:

- a. Three Syrian defenders and the wife of a defender whose lives were at risk due to serious health conditions were given financial assistance to receive **medical attention and treatment** in their home country or abroad. The decisions to grant them support were based on factors such as violations committed against the defenders' rights and their inability to cover the costs involved because of their on-going struggle in favour of human rights.
- b. Twelve Syrian, nine Libyan, two Egyptian and two Palestinian defenders and their families, who had to flee their home country because their lives were threatened as a result of their work and faced grave economic difficulties, received urgent support to **relocate temporarily abroad** allowing them to protect their safety and continue their work.<sup>4</sup>
- c. Five Egyptian, three Syrian and one Libyan defender who face constant harassment due to their human rights work, received support **to meet their basic safety needs inside their home country**, enabling them to mitigate threats and continue their human rights work.
- d. **Family members** facing precarious conditions in the absence of three human rights defenders arbitrarily detained in Syria received urgent support to meet their **basic needs**.

<sup>3</sup> Two mechanisms have been established by the Foundation to provide flexible responses to the needs expressed by human rights defenders: an urgent response mechanism, allowing the Board to make a decision on an application in the amount of € 5,000 (with a maximum 20 % overhead, i.e. € 6,000) within a maximum of 10 days, and a regular consultation mechanism employed at bi-annual meetings of the Board, during which proposals amounting up to € 40,000 each are discussed.

<sup>4</sup> The EMHRF keeps in consideration the 'do no harm' principle and is highly cautious of the drainage effect the relocation of activists could cause.

Since one of the main objectives of these interventions is to ensure that defenders facing difficulties or at risk can be supported over the medium and long term, the Foundation has engaged in coordinated actions with partners in order to ensure that a number of defenders and their relatives would receive effective support. More specifically:

- The Foundation coordinated its urgent interventions in support of sixteen Syrian, Libyan and Egyptian human rights defenders with several regional and international organisations, as part of their solidarity actions (urgent appeals, letters to support asylum and resettlement requests, press releases, trial-monitoring missions, meetings with officials, etc.), notably EuroMed Rights, the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Frontline Defenders, the Gulf Centre for Human Rights, and Amnesty International. In particular, it coordinated its urgent interventions aimed at supporting Libyan activists with an informal group of international NGOs to exchange information and synchronise funds.
- The Foundation recommended a proposal for a protective fellowship to ensure the longer term protection and education of one Palestinian defender at risk. Although the application was successfully selected, the UK authorities frustratingly denied the defender a visa. Moreover, the EMHRF is working on a database of scholarship opportunities that defenders may be able to take advantage of in future given the important needs in the field of lasting educational opportunities for defenders in exile, in particular in the areas of human rights, languages and management.
- As a member of the European Union-sponsored Platform for *“Enhancing coordination between programmes for temporary relocation of human rights defenders”*, the Foundation also took part in a regional meeting with NGOs, private foundations and universities on the relocation of at-risk human rights defenders in November 2015 in Istanbul. The meeting especially discussed available means and ways forward to strengthen regional relocation programmes for at-risk human rights defenders within the MENA region.
- Finally, the Foundation was instrumental in arranging for four international partners to cover the additional costs associated with the basic expenses of two Syrians, two Libyans and one Palestinian defender. In two cases, the Foundation acted as an intermediary.

In general, the ***outcome of the emergency interventions*** was encouraging:

- 98% of the defenders, of whom 29% are women, and their families who received support were able to avoid increased risks to their personal safety and threats against their lives.
- The vast majority of the defenders, who benefited from the Foundation’s interventions and who had been subjected to abuse or threats of abuses as a result of their human rights work, gave their testimonies to international organisations. Moreover, advocacy campaigns calling for the release of three Syrian activists detained were conducted by the members of the [Free Syria’s Silenced Voices](#) campaign. Thanks to the international pressure, two detained activists were freed from prison in July 2015.
- Six Syrian human rights defenders were granted asylum and resettled in Canada and in Europe, especially in Germany, France and Sweden, on the basis of their profiles as human rights activists and the highly precarious conditions they continued to face.
- 86% of the beneficiaries have been able to resume or continue their human rights work, particularly those in neighbouring countries, due to the assistance they received from the Foundation, among other factors. Most of them used their new location as a base to monitor and advance the human rights situation in their home country. For instance a group of Libyan individual defenders supported has now established a Libyan Human Rights Defenders’

Network in order to strengthen coordination and address joint recommendations, notably in the context of the UNSMIL-led political dialogue process.

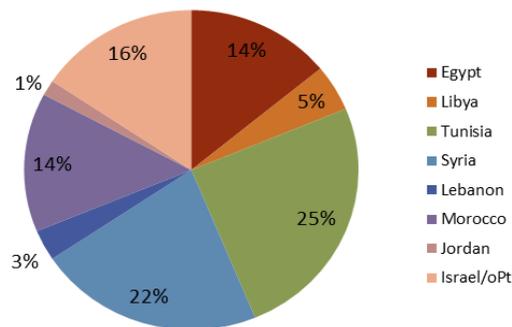
However, by the end of 2015, one activist remains detained by the Syrian State Security. Until this day, his whereabouts remain unknown. In the absence of the main breadwinner, his family may need renewed support in the future to meet their basic needs.

## **2.2. Flexible interventions in support of emerging NGOs and sensitive projects in the regional context**

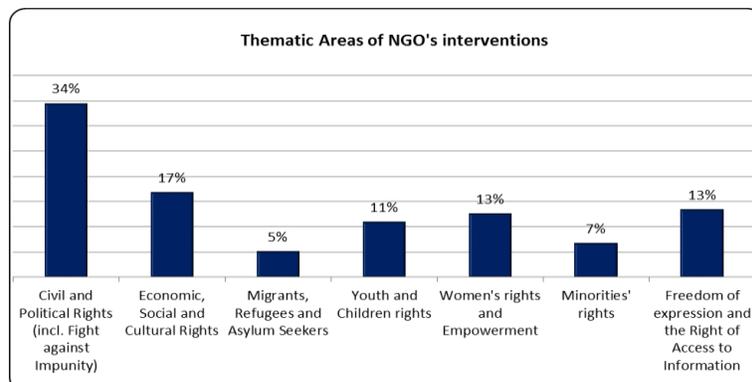
With a view to adapting to the different situations and dynamics at work in the region, the Foundation allocated flexible support, *both on an urgent and standard basis*,<sup>5</sup> to 63 human rights groups and NGOs that faced difficulties in securing funds or fell outside mainstream donors' priorities.

These interventions mainly focused on leveraging innovative human rights initiatives that have less than five years of existence. These emerging initiatives represent 71% of the beneficiaries of flexible grants. 61% of them are based and working in the remote areas of the countries appearing in the chart below.

**Distribution of grants to NGOs/groups per country**



The beneficiaries gave special consideration to the following issues during the year 2015:



<sup>5</sup> In particular, 6 out of the 63 recipient NGOs received urgent support from the EMHRF in the course of 2015.

In particular, the Foundation sought to respond to specific needs expressed by civil society actors in contexts with rapidly changing dynamics that differ from one country or region within a country to another.

To explain and provide examples of the Foundation's flexible actions in support of human rights NGOs, five contexts of intervention are described below.<sup>6</sup>

### **2.2.1. Protracted War and Impunity for Mass Atrocities in Syria**

Syria's armed conflict escalated further in 2015, subjecting civilians of all backgrounds to crimes against humanity and war crimes. Further obstacles have also emerged in the shape of the further rise of ISIS in eastern Syria, the Russian entry into the conflict, and western bombing campaigns against ISIS targets in 2015, bringing few prospects for a peaceful solution in the short term. The continuing disaster makes civil society mobilization and human rights activism extremely challenging and dangerous. Nonetheless and despite widespread pessimism about Syria's future and fatigue after half a decade of conflict, human rights defenders individually and through groups and organisations are continuing to provide vital assistance to the afflicted population, notably the victims of violations.

The Foundation therefore prioritised supporting human rights initiatives in the country and its neighbouring countries. It supported 14 initiatives to **document violations** and to **provide psychosocial, legal, administrative and knowledge-based services to vulnerable victims of violations, especially women, youth, children, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees**.

In particular, the Foundation's interventions focused on the following objectives:

- Highlighting the political, cultural and psychological effects of the conflict on the people of Syria, and reinforcing the documentation of human rights violations committed by all sides in the conflict, notably in areas under prolonged siege or witnessing intense fighting and aerial bombardment over the course of 2015, i.e. Aleppo, al-Raqqa and Deir el-Zur governorates;
- Providing psychosocial support and rehabilitation combined with skills development sessions on fundamental rights to women and children IDPs, through innovative activities<sup>7</sup> such as educational, cultural and media-related projects as well as employment-generating activities;
- Meeting the legal, administrative, psychosocial and knowledge-based support needs of the growing Syrian refugee community in Turkey, who are facing increasing restrictions and a shrinking space for civil society activity in 2015.

### **2.2.2. Enduring Political Infighting and Clashes between Rival Militias in Libya**

Amid fragile United Nations-sponsored negotiations, Libya's political and security crisis deepened in 2015. Armed clashes continued in the east, west, and south of the country, and ISIS-affiliated groups extended their presence and control of several regions, notably Sirte. The rival authorities, militias and criminal groups have

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<sup>6</sup> Contextual interventions in Jordan and Lebanon haven't been detailed due to the few initiatives supported in these countries in 2015. Moreover, the Foundation reports no intervention in Algeria in 2015 although a number of 2014 partnerships are still on-going.

<sup>7</sup> Impunity and the lack of education with regard to human rights can lead communities to be especially skeptical or distrustful of activities that are specifically or traditionally related to human rights.

continued to harass, attack, kill, torture, abduct and forcibly disappear hundreds of civilians, including civil society activists, journalists, politicians, and NGO workers with impunity, in the absence of any functional justice system.

Although human rights activism remains extremely dangerous in the country, forcing a number of defenders and NGOs to relocate to Tunisia, among other destinations, a few of them have decided to use their new location to secure their activities and staff, coordinating activity from outside and returning from time to time to the country in order to continue their work.

The Foundation therefore prioritized protecting and sustaining the activism and structures of these newly-formed and relocated Libyan civil society organisations. It supported 3 initiatives that **combat impunity** and **provide legal, administrative and knowledge-based services to the victims of human rights violations**, with the following specific objectives:

- Documenting human rights violations in Libya and providing legal and administrative assistance to the victims, notably victims of torture and IDPs;
- Promoting freedom of expression and media independence by consolidating the status and skills of Libyan journalists.

### 2.2.3. Crackdown on Dissent and Independent Civil Society in Egypt

New arbitrary policies and practices have been enacted against Egyptian civil society actors in 2015. In addition to the existing restrictive protest law and law on associations as well as the penal code,<sup>8</sup> new bills on terrorist entities<sup>9</sup> and on the suppression of terrorism<sup>10</sup> have entered into force allowing for individuals or groups such as human rights defenders, political parties, developmental associations and their members to be branded as terrorists and their peaceful activities classified as terrorist acts by the authorities in 2015. An increasing number of NGOs and their members as well as journalists, media workers, unions' workers and youth activists have been harassed, arrested, banned from traveling, subjected to smear campaigns, summoned for investigations and denied the possibility to legally register their activity, contravening Egypt's Constitution and international commitments.

The Foundation's interventions thus focused primarily on **containing the damage sustained by the human rights movement** and **maintaining the space for democratic freedoms in the country**. It also focused on the **documentation of grave human rights violations**, given the lack of independent investigations and accountability.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Notably the amendment of article 78 of the penal code, issued President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi on 21 September 2014, penalises the (unauthorized) receipt of foreign funding with a life sentence and a fine.

<sup>9</sup> Bill 8/2015 of 17 February 2015.

<sup>10</sup> Law 94/2015 of 15 August 2015.

<sup>11</sup> For safety reasons, its interventions will not be further detailed in this report.

#### 2.2.4. Rising Hostility facing Civil Society in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

2015 has witnessed an intensification of disinformation campaigns aimed at discrediting the work of human rights organisations in Israel and Palestine. Several Palestinian human rights NGOs involved in documenting alleged Israeli crimes, especially during Israel's various recurring wars against the population of Gaza,<sup>12</sup> and denouncing the settlement policy and practices in violation of international law, have been subjected to defamation campaigns by both public and anonymous sources in Israel. Further, Israel Cabinet's Ministerial Committee for Legislative Affairs approved an "NGO Transparency Bill" labelling NGOs as "foreign state entities" when they receive more than 50% of their funding from foreign public sources. Similarly, increasing restrictions by the Palestinian Authority on freedom of expression and media freedoms have been documented by NGOs, including the summoning and arrests of journalists, social media activists and students in the course of 2015.

The Foundation therefore focused its interventions on ***providing core funding to 9 civil society actors working on documenting, preventing and responding to human rights violations and the increasing hostility towards human rights organisations*** in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory over the course of 2015. In particular, these NGOs aimed at:

- Promoting coalition-building efforts and joint advocacy aimed at opposing the draft restrictive NGO funding law in Israel;
- Documenting the scope and the extent of the occupation and the repressive security measures targeting Palestinians in Israel and in the occupied Palestinian territory, and their impact on the Arab minority in Israel;
- Bolstering the realisation of the Palestinian community's civil, political, social and economic rights in Israel by advocating for an equal access to public service and respect for the principles of good governance of Arab local councils, municipalities and regional councils;
- Promoting respect for migrants' rights in Israel by providing information on and assistance to asylum seekers to realise their rights and pursuing resettlement options,<sup>13</sup> and exposing the negative effects of Israeli government policies towards immigrants;
- Promoting respect for women's rights and empowerment among Palestinian communities in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza by increasing awareness of and respect for sexual and reproductive rights, highlighting women's issues within marginalized areas and refugee camps, and including their demands in the Gaza reconstruction program.

#### 2.2.5. Securing Constitutional Gains and Respect for Universal Rights in Tunisia and Morocco

In a regional turmoil, Tunisia and Morocco appear to be the few countries to have taken the opportunity of change to secure certain democratic freedoms and improve the situation of human rights following the adoption of liberal and democratic Constitutions<sup>14</sup> and the holding of free and fair elections.<sup>15</sup> Beyond their

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<sup>12</sup> A joint submission was made to the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court on Israel's war against Gaza in December 2014.

<sup>13</sup> The Refugee Status Determination is the legal or administrative process by which governments or UNHCR determine whether a person seeking international protection is considered a refugee under international, regional or national law.

<sup>14</sup> Respectively on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2011 in Morocco and on 26 January 2014 in Tunisia.

<sup>15</sup> Election for a constituent assembly in Tunisia in October 2011; Legislative elections in Morocco in November 2011; Legislative and presidential elections in Tunisia in November 2014 and a runoff in December; Communal and Regional elections in September 2015 in Morocco.

differences and the complexities characterising the transition processes at work in each country, the initiated democratic transitions are strongly influenced by the strengthened role played by human rights defenders, as illustrated by the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to four Tunisian civil society organisations in October 2015.

But it is important not to get carried away by these historic moments, nor to grow complacent about the durability of these democratic experiments. Tunisia and Morocco's transitions remain vulnerable to both internal and external shocks, and many socioeconomic expectations remain unmet. A number of infringements on collective and individual freedoms took place in 2015. A priority for civil society activity has thus been to jointly defend the universality of rights, to press their respective governments to repeal and thoroughly overhaul existing laws and practices, reform public institutions, and implement constitutional guarantees to address deficiencies in human rights protection.

Although several United Nations agencies, foreign governments and international institutions have committed to support Tunisia and Morocco's transitions, human rights groups, notably those acting outside the mainstream human rights setting and in remote areas, report difficulties in accessing core funding that would enable them to expand and sustain their work at the local level.

Consequently, the Foundation gave priority to providing core funding to 16 Tunisian and 9 Moroccan civil society organisations, especially those operating in remote areas, to ***influence the current political agenda for reforms while defending individual rights and addressing social justice demands of the disadvantaged youth and women in the framework of the decentralization processes.***

In particular, the Foundation's interventions focussed on the following areas:

- Producing documented and analytical reports on the status of collective and individual freedoms;
- Advocating for respect of universal rights and freedoms in the development of current policies by integrating youth demands and suggesting reforms on economic, social and cultural rights, freedom of conscience, freedom of the press and the right to access information, the security sector and the Judiciary, according to international standards;
- Defending individual rights, notably the rights of victims of discriminations and violence, including migrants' children, women and LGBTQ, by providing support and a safe space to those victims;
- Monitoring violations and addressing the economic and social demands of the vulnerable populations, notably young people and rural women, in remote regions of Tunisia and Morocco, mainly through raising awareness activities, cultural events and capacity building workshops, in order to influence the priorities of the decentralization processes.

#### **2.2.6. Follow-up and Results of its Flexible Interventions**

In its role as intermediary and coach to the beneficiaries of its support, the Foundation:

- Provided encouragement and assistance to 45 emerging groups, especially those located in Syria, Tunisia and Egypt, in developing strategic action plans and proposals with the aim of enabling the Foundation, in consultation with other partners, to respond strategically to the needs of these newly formed groups and NGOs;

- Provided coaching to 25 new partners, especially those working in remote areas of Tunisia, by offering strategic advice relevant to their work and to the democratic management of an association, in cooperation with the regional office of EuroMed Rights;
- Encouraged 39% of the recipients or 24 NGOs to establish or maintain contacts with other groups and institutions working in the same thematic areas at the local, national and regional levels. This aimed to enable these NGOs to share information and experiences, identify potentials for synergies and coordinated activities, and consequently benefit from non-financial support that would contribute to the impact and sustainability of their activities. For example, ten Tunisian NGO beneficiaries took part in the national civil society symposium organised by EuroMed Rights' regional office for the Maghreb that gathered hundreds of Tunisian civil society organisations on 11-13 December 2015, signing a chart on major human rights priorities to be addressed in the future;<sup>16</sup>
- Coordinated its interventions and participated in consultations aimed at further exchanging information on the needs of Tunisian civil society and the respective programs offered by technical and financial partners in the country in order to reinforce convergences and synergies;<sup>17</sup>
- Coordinated its interventions and participated in consultations aimed at reinforcing documentation efforts on human rights violations in the Syrian context, organised by EuroMed Rights in connection with Syrian civil society organisations. As a result of these consultations, one NGO beneficiary of EMHRF support has benefited from the capacity building activities implemented by EuroMed Rights over the course of 2015, while two more should benefit from this programme in 2016;
- Coordinated its interventions and participated in consultations, organised by the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), aimed at reinforcing the role of Libyan civil society in the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights' investigation mission,<sup>18</sup> and the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL)-led political dialogue and the constitution-making process.
- Coordinated its interventions and participated in consultations, organised jointly by the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) and EuroMed Rights, aimed at developing a concerted approach and programs to reinforce solidarity actions aimed at protecting and sustaining the Egyptian human rights movement amid an escalating crackdown and closing space for civil society in the country.
- Facilitated exchange of contacts, acted as intermediary, forwarded a list of potential donors and/or helped in the submission of funding requests for 51% of the recipients or 31 NGOs. The Foundation also provided similar support to a number of funding applicants whose applications did not fall within the Foundation's mandate but whose work was valuable and had the potential to be supported by more appropriate donors.

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<sup>16</sup> Six thematic priorities have been defined during the symposium, notably the fight against terrorism and respect for human rights; women rights; economic and social rights; reform of the Judiciary and transitional justice; individual freedoms; freedom of expression, the right to access information and protection of journalists. The publication of the discussions from the symposium was released on 17 February 2016.

<sup>17</sup> This informal group consists of the French Institute of Tunisia, the Fondation de France, the Programme d'Appui à la Société Civile (PASC), the UN Development Programme, the Italian cooperation, among others.

<sup>18</sup> In its resolution [28/30](#) adopted in March 2015, the United Nations Human Rights Council requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to "urgently (...) dispatch a mission to investigate violations and abuses of international human rights law that have been committed in Libya since the beginning of 2014, and to establish the facts and circumstances of such abuses and violations, with a view to avoiding impunity and ensuring full accountability, in coordination with the United Nations Support Mission in Libya".

It is difficult to measure the long-term results of the support provided to these groups and NGOs, not only because most of the partnerships are still on-going but also because political will — from both inside and outside the region — is often a precondition to achieving long-term results.

Nonetheless, some of the key successes achieved by the Foundation's local partners in 2015 can be highlighted:

- **Unique legal aid and representation services were provided to over 410 victims of human rights violations**, notably human rights defenders, political activists and journalists, who were facing trials under fabricated criminal accusations, as well as workers and women victims of sexual harassment and assaults.
- **Analytical and documented reports on grave human rights violations were produced by NGOs in Syria, Libya, Egypt, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.** One noteworthy example was a report on cases of ISIS fighters from al-Raqqa and Deir al-Zur governorates in Syria using the ID documents of their dead victims to gain asylum in Europe. Two of these Syrian groups rose to become the main sources of information about civilian life and violations committed under ISIS in al-Raqqa and Deir al-Zur governorates and the most cited by the new emerging and international media. 286 cases of enforced disappearances were also documented and 50 communications submitted to the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID), though the Syrian government has so far responded to only six of these. Reports also covered the widespread violations of journalists' rights and media freedoms in Libya. Lastly, a report released at the beginning of 2016 documented the scope and extent of the repressive security measures targeting Palestinians in Israel and in the occupied territory, and their impact on the Palestinian Arab minority in Israel.
- **Civil society reviews and recommendations aimed at amending and enhancing organic laws in Tunisia and Morocco were produced.** In particular, this included law n° 82-70 of 6 August 1982 on the statutes of Tunisia's internal security forces and a law aimed at protecting Tunisian women from violence according to international standards. Moreover, review notes commenting on the draft bill n° 13-13 on the right of access to information and the draft bill n° 90-13 related to freedom of the press were submitted to the authorities in Morocco. Lastly, coordinated civil society efforts aimed at amending article 230 of Tunisia's penal code to protect victims of discriminations are currently on-going.
- 43% of the Foundation's interventions in Tunisia aimed at **supporting civil society actors in the remote governorates of Kasserine, Gafsa and Sidi Bouzid**, in which access to economic and social development as well as rights remain a priority, as exemplified by the developments of January 2016. In particular, fourteen cases of victims from Gafsa governorate were submitted to Tunisia's Truth and Dignity Commission to advocate for the governorate to be considered as a region victim of the past dictatorship. In addition, civil society trainings and awareness-raising activities aimed at reinforcing citizens' participation in local governance to address rights issues reached out to 700 young people and rural women in the governorates of Beja, Bizerte, Nabeul, el-Kef, Zaghuan, Kairouan, Kasserine, Sidi Bouzid, Gafsa, Kebili, Medenine and Tataouine.
- Libyan individual defenders and NGO beneficiaries took part in the **United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL)'s consultative meeting** in August 2015 and made recommendations that were included in the final political agreement and annexes, signed in Skheirat (Morocco) in December 2015. Furthermore, they assisted the UNSMIL and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to jointly release a report on the [violent attacks and threats against Libyan human rights defenders](#).

- Three **written interventions were submitted to the United Nations Human Rights Council** highlighting the specific situation of women human rights defenders, sexual violence and women's political participation in addition to the submission of a written statement to the Committee of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in October 2015. In addition, a joint submission report concerning the socio-economic and civil rights of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon was made to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for the Universal Periodic Review of Lebanon in November 2015.
- The **prison "memoirs"** of a Syrian activist, who spent 16 years in prison, were translated into French from Arabic and published in 2015. In addition to being an eye-witness account of the author's years in prison, this book provides a valuable reflection to a French-speaking audience on the repression and the atrocities perpetrated on a large scale and the denial of political pluralism and fundamental freedoms carried out in Syria over the course of several decades. Moreover, it places the challenges of democratization and human rights, cultural and political emancipation at the heart of the future priorities for the country and the wider region.
- High quality **short documentaries** on the early emergence and effects of barrel bombs in the Syrian civil war as well as efforts to preserve historical artefacts from war damage have been produced. Moreover, five **cartoon episodes and drawings** from Syrian artists, capturing the collective memories of Deir al-Zur city, have been shown and appraised at the *Fusion arts festival* in Berlin. Four **emerging media initiatives** also received financial support to promote pluralist and tolerant views, reporting on events in a way that counters the state media's control of information. One of these websites already receives about 750,000 visits per month.
- Eight **Syrian studies were published** on intercommunity relations between IDPs and local populations in al-Salamiya, the impact of poor school enrolment on Syrian refugee children in Lebanon, school curricula and access to education in ISIS-controlled areas, the societal impact of Hezbollah and other Shiite militias' involvement in the civil war, the impact and spread of new and traditional media forms among Syrian refugees in Gaziantep, and the war economy in Syria, among others.
- **Legal advice, group and individual counselling and dialogue sessions were provided to about 900 Syrian refugees in Southern Turkey**, on topics such as divorce, marriage and childbirth registration and in order to overcome trauma.
- Nine workshops aimed at **raising awareness and training 214 Syrian civil society activists** (among whom 40% were women) have been organized in Al-Hasakah and Aleppo governorates on the topics of **conflict resolution, non-violent resistance, transitional justice and human rights, on women's rights and combatting sexual violence and the recruitment of child soldiers in a conflict context**. As a result of these workshops, a number of campaigns have been organised to reduce the presence of weapons in public places at the local level, to revoke a Sharia dress code imposed on women and to limit their mobility in a locality within Aleppo governorate.
- Despite conservative patriarchal attitudes, 2107 women from the marginalised and impoverished al-Shuja'a district in Gaza, which was severely affected during the last hostilities, received trainings aimed at **encouraging female representation and participation in the reconstruction plan**. As a result, several women have become active members of the National Reconstruction Council.
- 126 **complaints were lodged against Arab local councils' illegal governance practices in Israel**. Through such cases, seven councils have had to improve their transparency by establishing and updating websites, publishing comptroller reports and launching transparent tenders to run public schools, among others.

- Twelve NGOs, facing a shift in donors' priorities and/or serious difficulties in securing support for their core activities, received bridging support. This enabled them to ***retain a physical presence and staff members***, a prerequisite to sustaining their leadership and ensuring the consolidation of the civil society movement.
- Thanks to the Foundation's ***closer cooperation with international partners***, several of its beneficiaries were able to benefit from technical and/or financial support from EuroMed Rights, the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), Frontline Defenders, the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), the Heinrich Böll, Konrad Adenauer and Friedrich Ebert Foundations, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Reporters without Borders (RSF), PEN International, the Open Society Foundations (OSF), the Sigrid Rausing Trust, Oxfam Novib, the European Endowment for Democracy (EED), the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED), Hivos - Humanist Institute for Cooperation, the Fund for Global Human Rights, the Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Canal France International, International Media Support (IMS) as well as foreign representations and the delegations of the European Union, among others.
- 40% of NGO beneficiaries were able to obtain complementary and additional financing from other institutions, thus ensuring, at least in part, the sustainability of their activities.

Despite these positive results, Libyan, Egyptian and Syrian civil society partners have experienced major difficulties and delays in implementing their activities due to the precarious political and security situations in the countries. The Foundation thus adopted a flexible approach accommodating the fact that actions supported may not be fully implemented on time and as initially agreed upon, taking into consideration alternative implementation plans.

### **3. Indirect Support to Human Rights NGOs, Groups and Defenders**

Beyond providing financial assistance, the Foundation took other steps to support human rights defenders - mainly by being present at the local level and by meeting with regional and international actors involved in the promotion of democracy and the protection of human rights.

The purpose of these activities was to assess the developments occurring in the countries of the region, measure the impact of the assistance provided and, where appropriate, consider additional support actions adjusted to the needs and challenges facing human rights defenders. They also resulted in strengthened partnerships with key actors whose focus is on supporting the local human rights movement over the long term. Two activities were devoted to achieving this goal in 2015, as set out below.

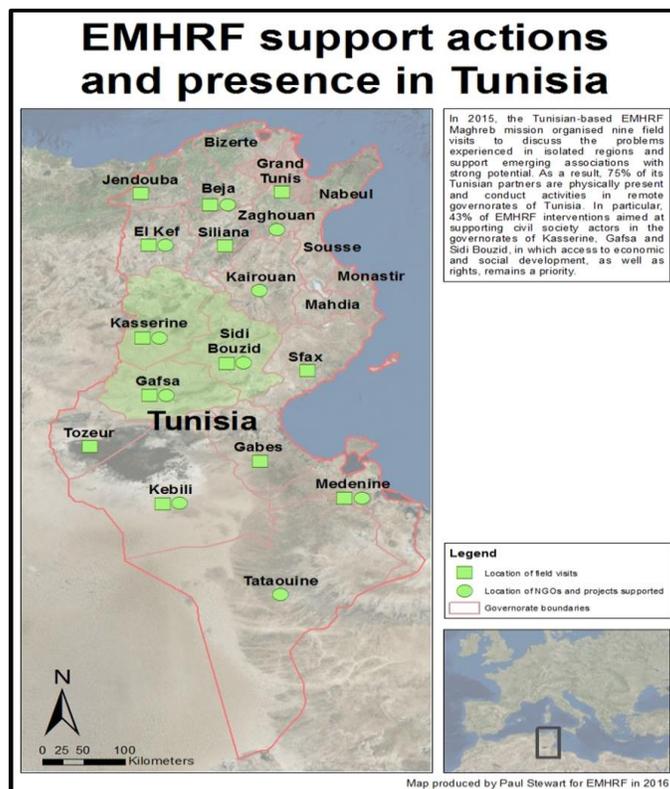
#### **3.1. Strengthened presence in the Maghreb and Mashreq regions**

The Foundation sustained its activities in the region through its physical presence in Tunisia and regular visits to Syria's neighbouring countries as well as regular civil society consultations on Libya and on Egypt in order to adapt more quickly to changing circumstances and the needs of local defenders in the course of 2015.

### 3.1.1. Maghreb: Reinforced Presence in Tunisia and Civil Society Consultations on Libya

The Maghreb mission of the Foundation, located in Tunisia, organized nine field visits to the Tunisian governorates of Tunis, Kebili, Tozeur, Kasserine, Sidi Bouzid, Gafsa, Medenine, Gabes, Sfax, el Kef, Beja, Jendouba and Siliana in the course of 2015. These visits have enabled the Foundation to carry out exploratory work, discuss the problems experienced in isolated regions and to pinpoint emerging associations with strong potential in order to identify their needs for development and assistance. Moreover, these visits have allowed the Foundation to follow up closely on the development of the emerging associations' actions, advise them on possible collaborations, defining projects and the democratic management of NGOs.

As a result of these visits, twelve out of the sixteen Tunisian partners of the Foundation, physically present in remote areas of the country (as shown in the map below), received both direct support and coaching services aimed at leveraging and strengthening their activities.



Moreover, although the Maghreb mission could not conduct field visits to Libya due to the worsening security conditions across the country, the Foundation took an active part in the Libya Working Group meetings in Tunisia, coordinated by the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), in order to reinforce collaboration

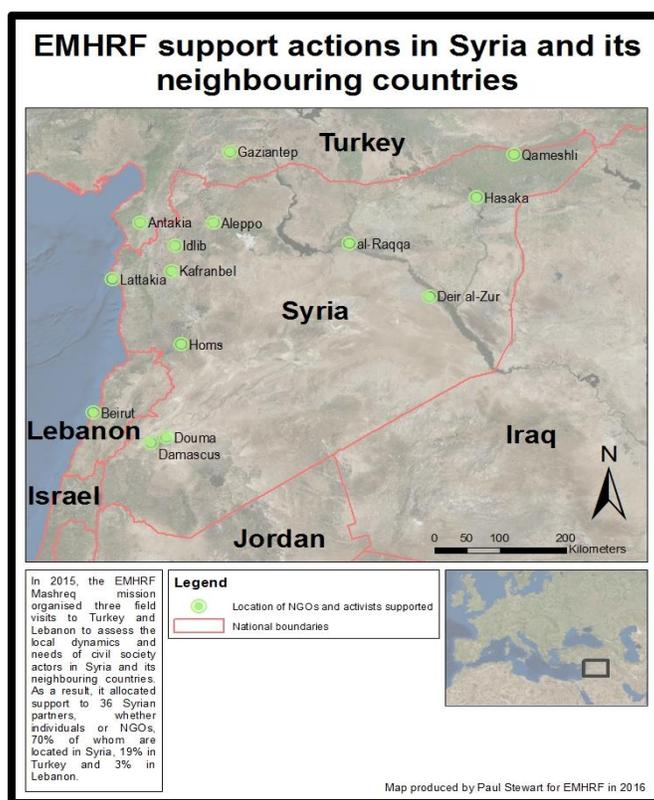
and exchange of information between international and national NGOs working in/on Libya to address the question of the protection and the sustainability of the Libyan civil society movement in a concerted manner.

These monthly meetings assisted Libyan and international civil society to exchange views and recommendations on the OHCHR investigation mission,<sup>19</sup> on the political dialogue and draft political agreement,<sup>20</sup> and on the Constitutional draft process.

### 3.1.2. Mashreq: Field Visits to Syria’s Neighbouring Countries and Civil Society Consultations on Egypt

Although the Foundation has not established a physical presence in the Mashreq region because of worsening security conditions, the Foundation organised field visits to Lebanon and Turkey in the course of September-November 2015. It also consulted a number of partners and activists in order to assess the local dynamics and the needs of Syrian civil society actors with a view to refine orientations with regard to future priorities for the support provided by the Foundation.

These meetings and consultations with around sixty Syrian NGOs and activists, representatives of regional and international institutions as well as foreign delegations have allowed the Foundation to support defenders and associative actors working in different local contexts, as reflected in the map below.<sup>21</sup>



<sup>19</sup> The OHCHR mission started work on August 1<sup>st</sup> from Tunisia with a mandate covering January 2014-March 2015.

<sup>20</sup> UNSMIL consultation with Libyan civil society took place in August 2015 in Tunis in order to discuss human rights and civil society recommendations to be included in the final political agreement and annexes, signed in Skheirat (Morocco) in December 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Interventions in Syria accounted for 70% of all interventions while interventions respectively accounted for 19% in Turkey and 3% in Lebanon.

Moreover, although the Mashreq mission could not conduct field visits to Egypt due to the worsening security conditions across the country, the EMHRF continued to keep communication channels with Egyptian civil society. It further organised and participated in a number of meetings to evaluate the impact of the threat of closure and slow death hanging over Egypt's independent civil society and develop a concerted approach and programs to reinforce solidarity actions aimed at protecting and sustaining the human rights movement.

### **3.2. Reinforced cooperation with international NGOs and foundations to address the risks facing defenders and the shrinking space for civil society in the region**

As part of its activities aimed at strengthening cooperation to ensure long-term and sustainable support to human rights defenders, the Foundation co-organised and took an active part in consultations and meetings with international NGOs and foundations involved in human rights issues.

#### **3.2.1. Strengthening Collaborations to Address the Risks facing HRDs**

The Foundation co-organised, within the framework of the *Human Rights Defenders' Working Group* of the International Human Rights Funders' Group (IHRFG),<sup>22</sup> a Learning Institute titled "*Beyond Passwords: Enhancing Digital Security for Human Rights Donors and their Grantees*", which took place on the occasion the IHRFG Annual Meeting in San Francisco on 26-28 January 2015.

Led by Tactical Technology Collective, a specialized NGO, the Institute provided a space for several funders in the human rights community to challenge their views about topics related to digital security concerns in the presence of experts and activists working in repressive contexts. This institute left the participants with a sense of urgency to adopt tangible security standards and evolving procedures in their work to protect their local beneficiaries. [EMHRF reflections](#) on the institute were disseminated through a newsletter.

Moreover, the Foundation joined a consortium of twelve international and regional NGOs, including Frontline Defenders, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), Reporters without Borders (RSF), the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), the East and Horn of Africa HRDs Project (EHAHRDP), Urgent Action Funds for Women HRDs (UAF), Forum Asia, Peace Brigades International (PBI), Protection International (PI), the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) and the International Network for Economic and Social Rights (ESCRN) to strengthen a strategic and collaborative response to protection needs expressed by human rights defenders worldwide.

After over a year of collaborative work, a joint proposal was delivered and supported by the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). The implementation of the first-of-its-kind European Union HRDs Mechanism entitled "[ProtectDefenders.eu](#)" started in October, and its launch took place in Brussels on 2 December 2015.

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<sup>22</sup> The International Human Rights Funders Group (IHRFG) is a network of international foundations which currently has more than 650 members representing approximately 275 organisations that provide human rights-related grants around the world. The Foundation became a member of IHRFG in 2010 and it is a co-founder and member of IHRFG working group on human rights defenders, established in 2011.

### 3.2.2. Strengthening Funders' Strategic Response to the Shrinking Space for Civil Society

In the wake of the Egyptian government's declaration of war on civil society that has created a climate of fear, limitation, and uncertainty across civil society circles and forced donors to hold off on supporting organisations, the Foundation decided to organize an opening plenary session to discuss the situation and strategic orientations that can be undertaken to support the Egyptian civil society at Ariadne European Human Rights Funders' Network's<sup>23</sup> Annual Meeting and Policy Briefing in March 2015.

As a member of the Steering Committee of a Working Group on Cross Borders Philanthropy<sup>24</sup> within the Ariadne Network of European Human Rights Funders, the Foundation co-organised a *Funders Workshop on the Disabling Environment for Civil Society* in Berlin in June 2015.<sup>25</sup> The aims of the workshop were to look at ways funders can challenge the disabling environment for cross border funding, explore and elaborate how funders can use specific advocacy and policy levers to change the terms of the debate and produce a clear plan to guide funders' future actions and strategies.

As a result of this workshop, a practice-orientated guide '*Challenging the Closing Space for Civil Society - a Practical Starting Point for Funders*' was elaborated and a specific '*Funders Initiative for Civil Society*' established that will aim at finding allies, assessing challenges, building new alliances and identifying gaps and opportunities.

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<sup>23</sup> Ariadne is a peer-to-peer network of more than 400 grant-makers and funders from and active within Europe, who support human rights and social change projects worldwide. The Foundation became a member of Ariadne in 2011.

<sup>24</sup> The working group, whose main mandate is to promote strategic collaboration and actions from private foundations to respond to the global shrinking space for civil society, was established in 2014.

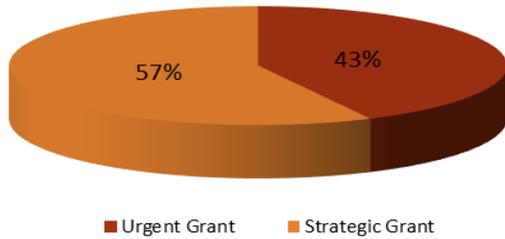
<sup>25</sup> At the workshop, the Foundation moderated two sessions, i.e. one consultation on the disabling environment in the Middle East and North Africa and another on developing strategies and tools to sustain civil society under attack.

#### 4. The 2015 interventions in figures

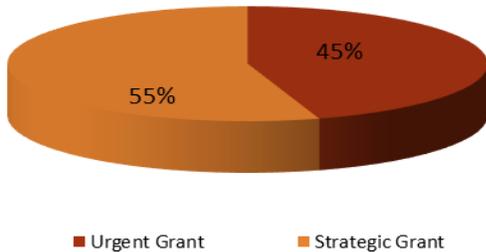
The following charts present the Foundation's support actions for human rights defenders in figures.

##### 4.1. Types of grants allocated

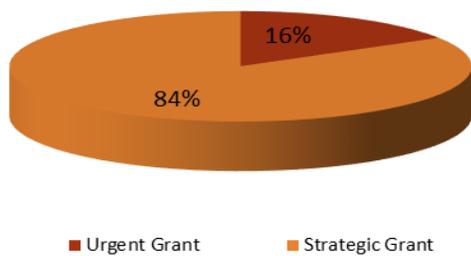
**Distribution based on the number of grants**



**Distribution based on the number of beneficiaries**



**Distribution based on the amounts granted**



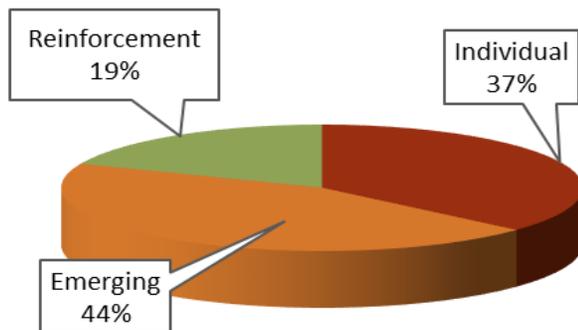
*Although lower in amounts than the strategic or standard grants, the Foundation's urgent interventions benefited a more or less equal number of defenders in 2015, notably to protect their lives in Syria, Libya, Egypt and Palestine, where the continued armed conflicts, rising hostility and closing civil society spaces have generated the greatest difficulties and risks for exercising human rights work.*

*The two [public](#) grant-making mechanisms established by the Foundation proved to be crucial in order to be both responsive to unanticipated situations as they arise and to consolidate sensitive activities and capacities of defenders and NGOs at the local levels.*

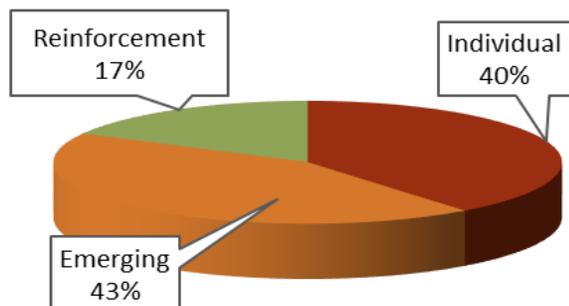
*The average amount of grants provided in 2015 was € 13,737, which is slightly higher than in 2014. This figure reflects the significance of the support action rather than the level of funds needed to protect and consolidate defenders' work in the Arab region. Defenders and their families, as well as new grassroots initiatives working in remote areas often need less funds than associations whose scope of action is national.*

#### 4.2. Types of beneficiaries

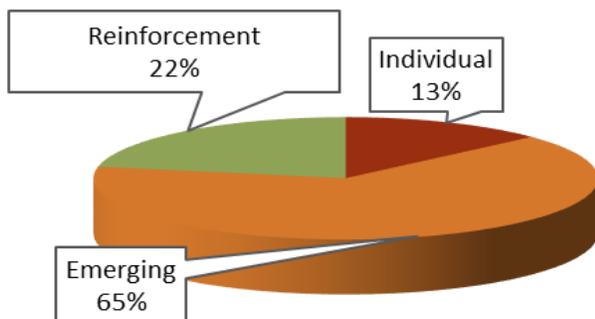
**Distribution based on the number of grants**



**Distribution based on the number of beneficiaries**



**Distribution based on the amounts granted**



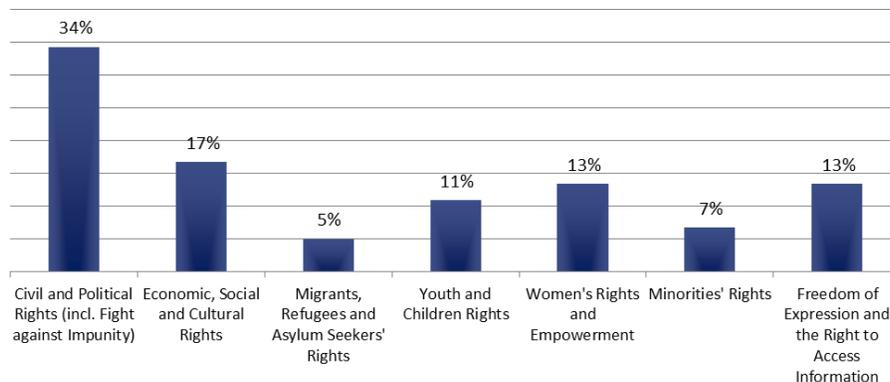
*Significant threats, financial difficulties and obstacles to creating alliances remained central concerns for the Foundation's beneficiaries in 2015.*

*As a result, the Foundation continued to focus its support actions on individual at-risk and isolated human rights defenders that neither have the contacts nor the experience to reach out to mainstream donors in the region.*

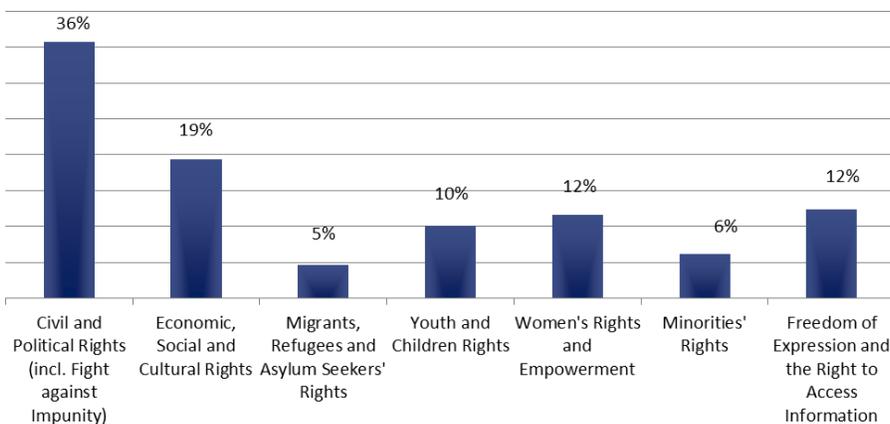
*83% of the Foundation's beneficiaries are thus individual defenders in danger and emerging civil society actors working in remote areas.*

### 4.3. Thematic focus of beneficiaries

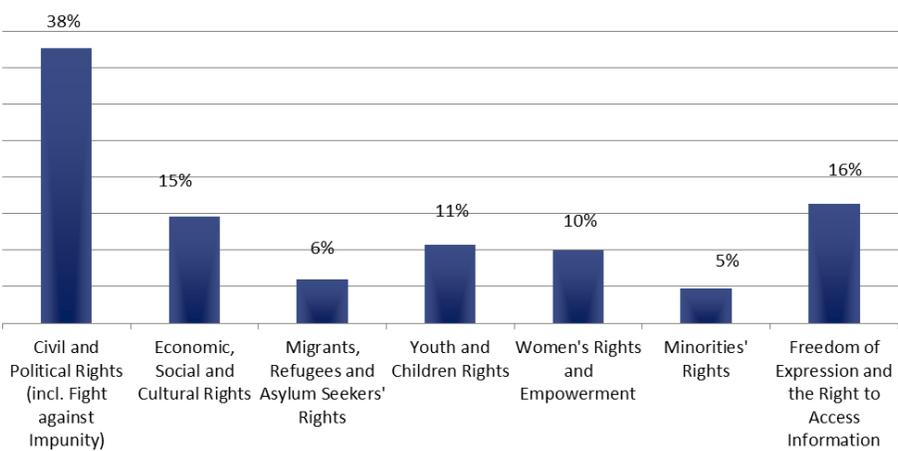
Distribution based on the number of interventions



Distribution based on the number of beneficiaries



Distribution based on the amounts granted

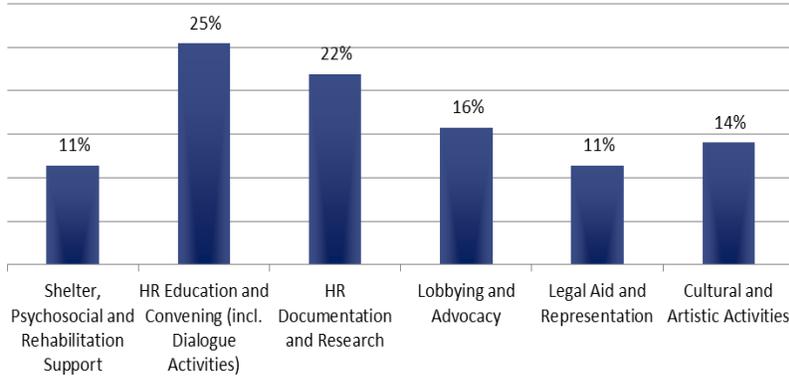


*The beneficiaries' actions in 2015 mainly aimed at combatting impunity and promoting national efforts towards the adoption and implementation of reforms in the areas of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, given the interconnected nature and relevance of these subjects in transitional contexts and in environments where repression against defenders grows harsher. The portion of interventions dealing with these issues thus reached 51% in 2015.*

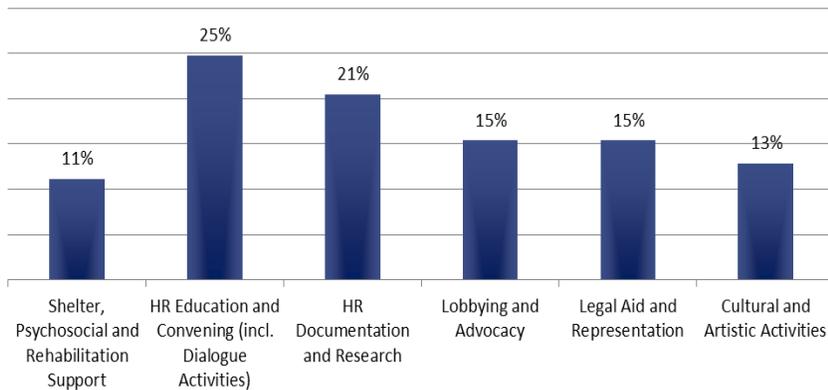
*Moreover, given their central role alongside vulnerabilities in societies and for building the foundations of real and sustainable democracies, the Foundation gave priority to support initiatives aimed at reinforcing the participation and leadership of youth and women as well as defending their rights. These interventions represented 24% of all its interventions during the year.*

#### 4.4. Activities of recipients

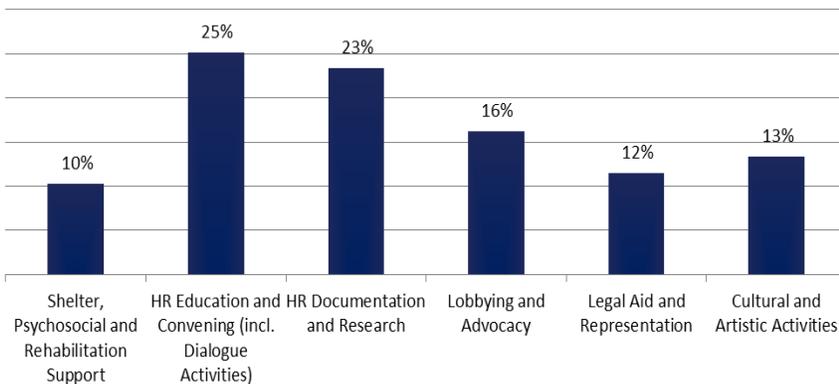
Distribution based on the number of interventions



Distribution based on the amount of beneficiaries



Distribution based on the amounts granted



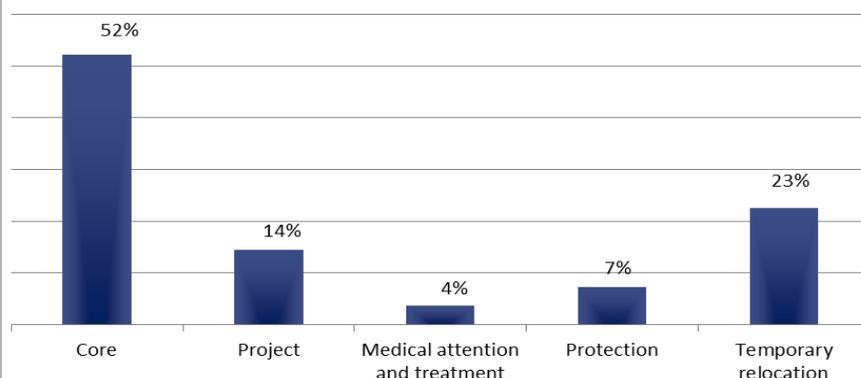
The largest categories of activities implemented by the Foundation's beneficiaries aimed at combatting impunity by documenting human rights violations and providing legal and medical assistance to the victims. These activities, carried out in especially hostile contexts, represented 44% of the activities engaged by the Foundation's local partners.

Moreover, complementary activities related to human rights education, dialogue and advocacy, which are crucial to bolster national efforts of reconstruction and to promote the implementation of human rights reforms, accounted for 41 % of all interventions.

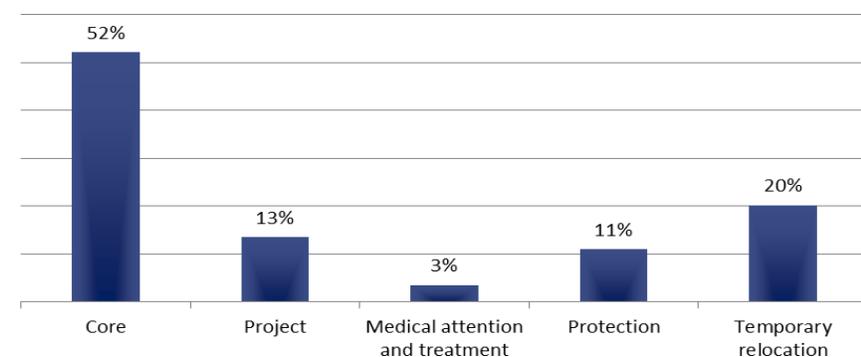
Last but not least, new unifying approaches have continued being encouraged by 13% of the Foundation's beneficiaries, such as cultural, media and artistic activities, as alternatives to traditional means to reach out to a younger audience in the region.

#### 4.5. Types of expenditure covered

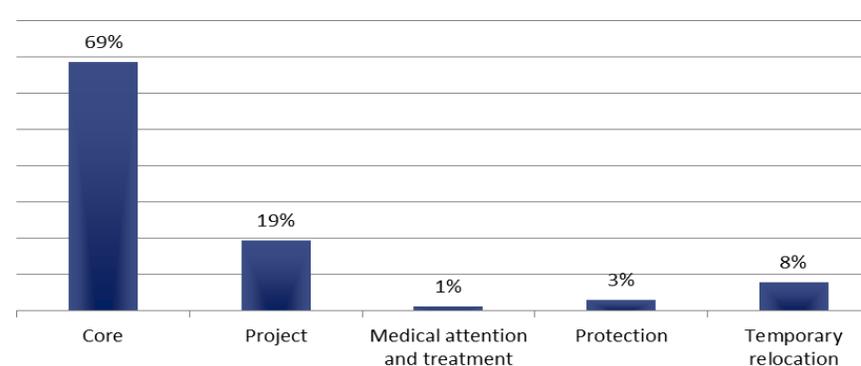
Distribution based on the amount of interventions



Distribution based on the amount of beneficiaries



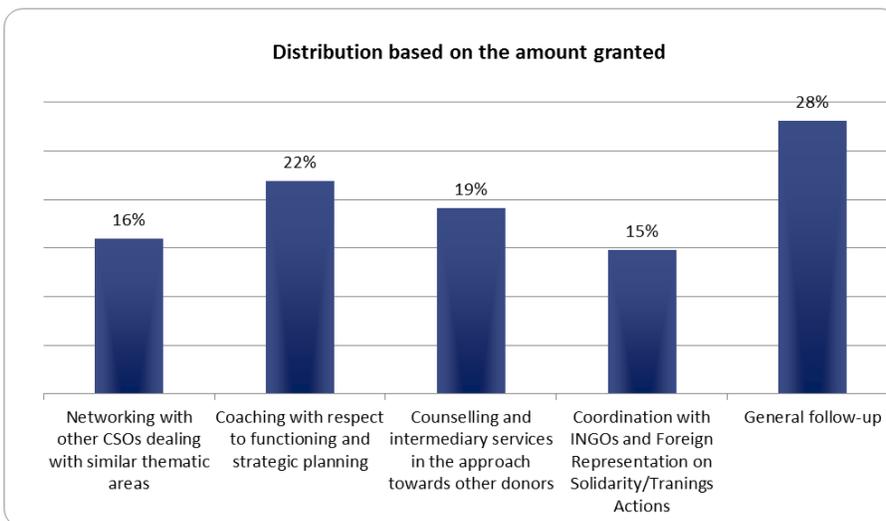
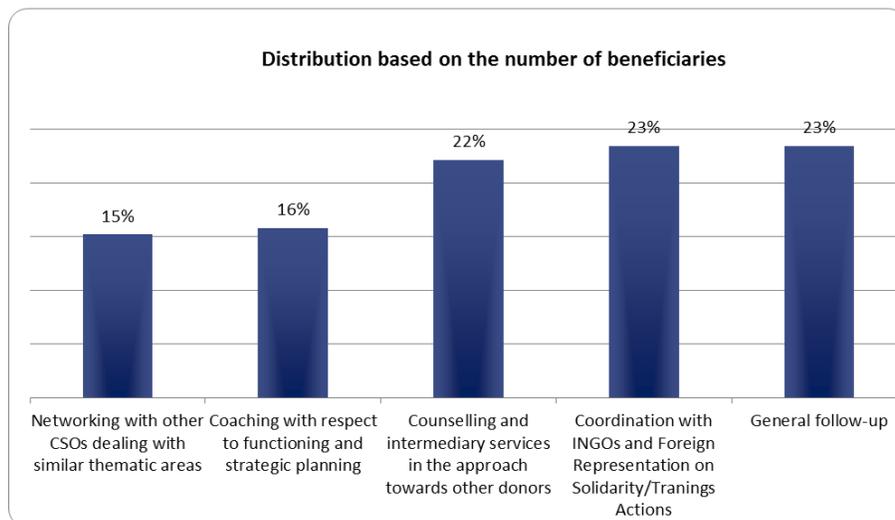
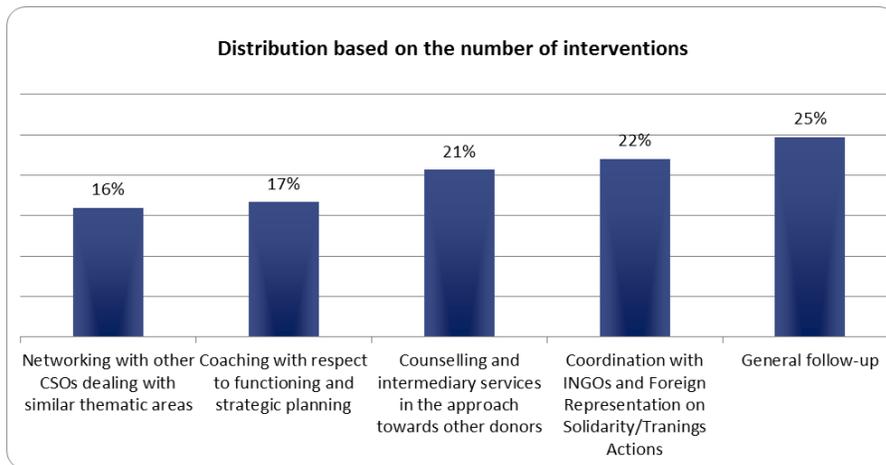
Distribution based on the amounts granted



*To fill in a significant gap in terms of funding for local civil society actors, the Foundation continued to give priority to cover the operation costs, i.e. the rent and wages, in order to reinforce the implementation, professionalization and sustainability of their actions in the region. 52% of the grants allocated thus covered core expenses of NGOs.*

*Moreover, 34% of the interventions covered expenses in terms of human rights defenders' protection, consisting mainly of medical care, support to families' basic needs and temporary relocation.*

#### 4.6. Types of indirect support



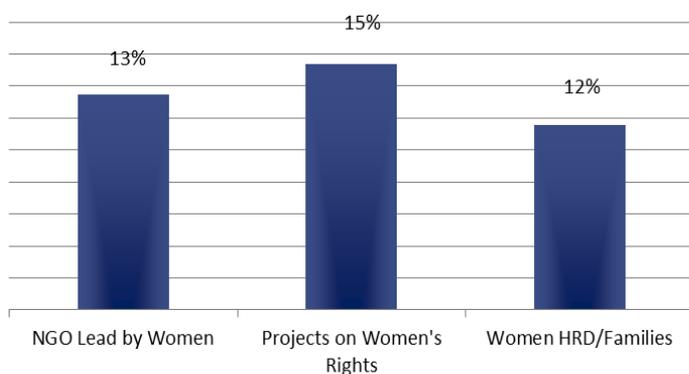
*Besides providing financial assistance, one of the main goals of the Foundation is to help the most vulnerable defenders and NGOs in pursuing their work over the long term. To that end, the Foundation has carried out 76% of specific follow-up actions to further assist its local beneficiaries. These indirect support consisted in providing counselling services aimed at strengthening coordination, networking and funding opportunities.*

*These are especially important for emerging NGOs in order to allow them to exchange information and experiences, to explore the potential for synergies and coordinated activities, and as a corollary to benefit from additional support that contributes to the impact and sustainability of their work.*

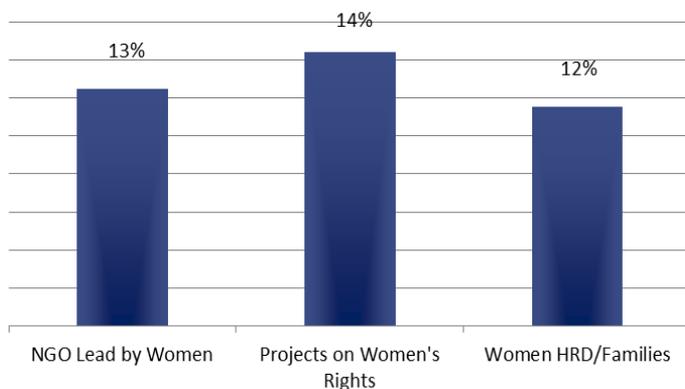
*This proved to be valuable since 40% of recipients of the Foundation's assistance were able to obtain additional financing from other institutions.*

#### 4.7. Gender

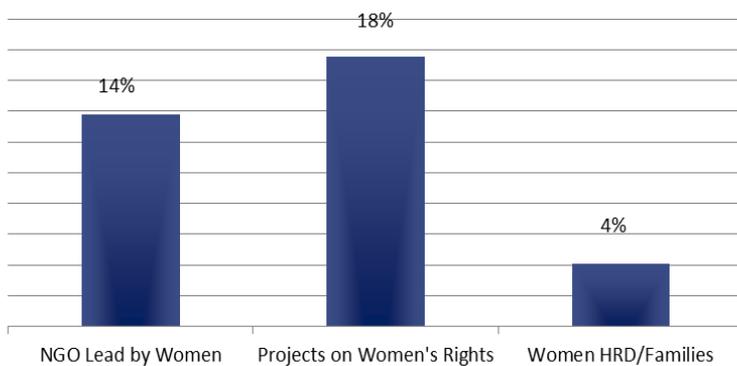
Distribution based on the number of interventions



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Distribution based on the amounts granted



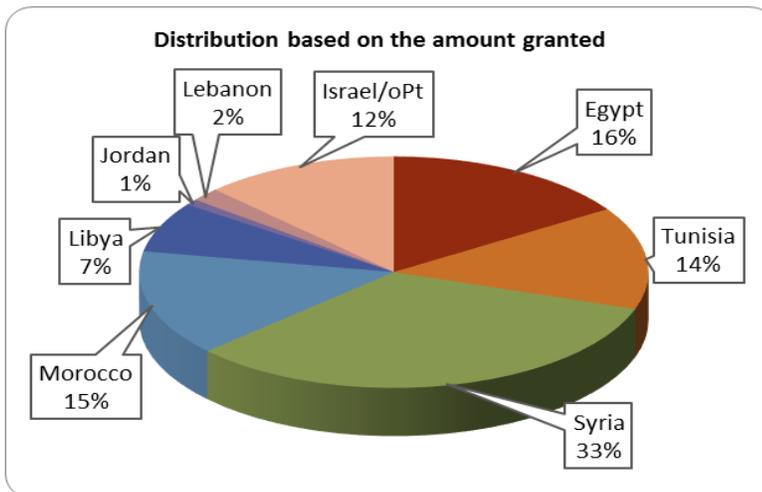
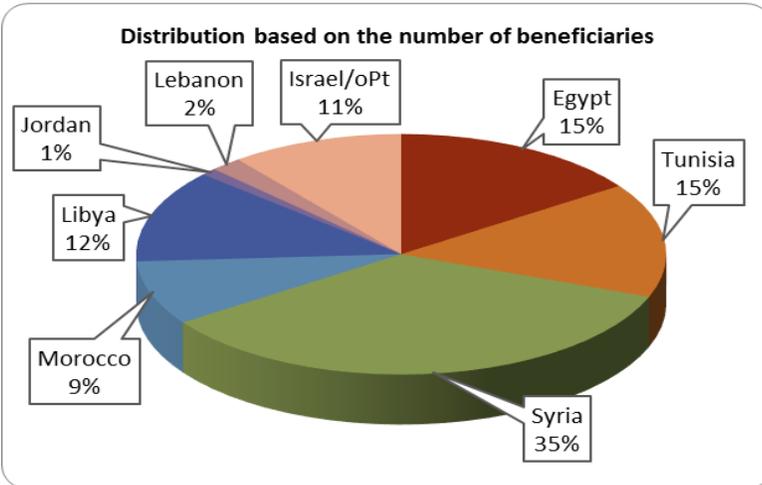
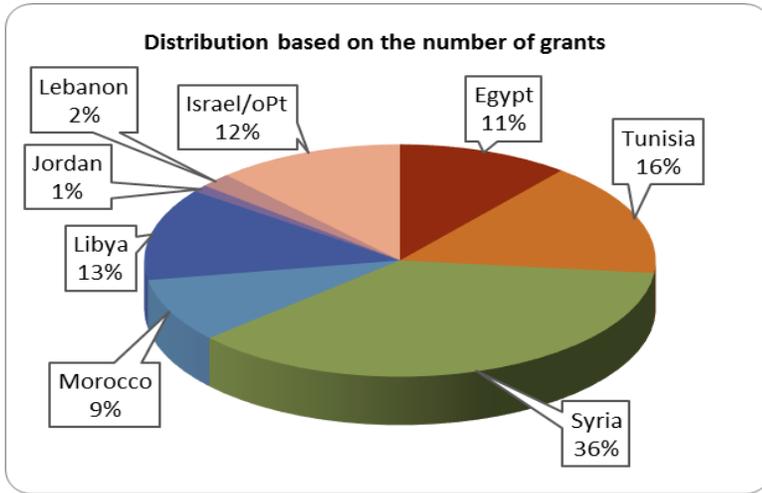
*The gender dimension is an integral part of the Foundation's intervention strategy.*

*The situation and specific role of women in the protection of human rights require special attention, and the Foundation accordingly attaches great importance to projects that are specifically designed to deal with gender equality and parity, and to strengthen the involvement and leadership of women.*

*This is all the more relevant in current circumstances, where women are the target of various forms of violence and not sufficiently represented in transition processes at work even though they were at the forefront of the revolutions.*

*Considering that the issue of gender equality is central to any democratisation process, the percentage of interventions dealing with the protection and promotion of respect for women rights, reached 14% of all interventions in 2015.*

#### 4.8. Countries



The protracted war in Syria has been at the centre of the Foundation's concerns in 2015. In a context of complete impunity, the Foundation's interventions have been focused on protecting defenders, documenting violations and providing psychosocial, legal, administrative and knowledge-based services to the victims of violations, especially vulnerable women, youth, children, internally displaced persons and refugees.

In addition, the Foundation expanded its work in Libya, Egypt, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) compared to the previous year, due to the continued conflict in Libya and mounting hostility against independent civil society in Egypt, Israel and the oPt.

At the same time, the Foundation was mindful of the importance to reinforce civil society work to accompany human rights reforms in the transition contexts in Morocco and Tunisia. Those actors remained a quarter of the recipients of Foundation grants in 2015.

## **5. Organisational Matters**

### **5.1. Consultation of the Foundation's Council of Representatives**

On the occasion of EuroMed Rights General Assembly, the Board met with the Foundation's Council of Representatives that consists of EuroMed Rights' members, i.e. 80 civil society organisations from the Euro-Mediterranean region. The meeting took place in Brussels on 13 June 2015 and discussed major actions undertaken by the Foundation during the period 2012-2014 and future orientations.<sup>26</sup>

### **5.2. Financial Partnerships**

In 2015, the Foundation continued to enjoy the trust of, and it received renewed contributions for its main operations from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DAPP)<sup>27</sup> and the Sigrid Rausing Trust (SRT). In addition, it received support for country-specific actions from the Foundations to Promote Open Society (OSF) and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) on Syria, Egypt and Tunisia.

The Foundation was also a selected partner for the external assessment of the regional strategy of the SIDA in the Middle East and North Africa. On this occasion, the evaluation team met with the Foundation's staff, local grantees and partners in Egypt, Tunisia, Lebanon and Jordan that formulated a number of recommendations. The final report of the evaluation published in May follows in large recommendations made by the EMHRF and its grantees.

Lastly, the Foundation has joined a consortium of twelve regional and international partners and received support from the EIDHR to establish a mechanism to protect human rights defenders at risk [ProtectDefenders.eu](http://ProtectDefenders.eu) (through a variety of complementary activities including financial support, capacity building, advocacy and alliances building, monitoring and reporting, etc.) during the period 2015-2018.

### **5.3. Information and Communication**

The Foundation maintained its policy of confidentiality regarding most of the information related to the beneficiaries of its funding. This policy was adopted and carried out because of the serious risks to which the activities and persons applying for funding, the recipients of funds or other human rights defenders in the region could be exposed. At the same time, the Foundation ensures that its activities are transparent by providing sufficient information in its activity report and to its main donors.

The Foundation has also printed out an updated leaflet and it updated its website (<http://www.emhrf.org/>), with clear explanations about the rules governing the presentation of emergency and regular funding requests as well as other news, in the three working languages of the Foundation (English, French and Arabic), so as to make this information and these basic documents easily accessible to all.

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<sup>26</sup> The minutes from the Consultation meeting are available [online](#).

<sup>27</sup> Through the intermediary of EuroMed Rights.

#### **5.4. Internal Governance**

The composition of the Foundation's Board, initially made up of nine members, who fulfil their mandate on a volunteer basis, has changed to comprise twelve members: Bassma Kodmani, Souhayr Belhassan and Marc Schade-Poulsen have been co-opted as additional members in their individual capacities in October 2015.

In addition, the Board of the Foundation was assisted by a Secretariat consisting of the following 7 full-time and 2 part-time staff members, in addition to interns:

##### *Programme Staff:*

- Anne-Sophie Schaeffer (graduate in International Public Law), employed full-time as Programme Director in France (partly replaced by an external consultant for her maternity leave during the period May-August 2015);
- Samy Lendvai-Karmout (graduate in International Relations), employed full-time as Regional Coordinator Mashreq in Denmark (temporarily located in France during the period January-October 2015);
- Frances Topham Smallwood (graduate in International Relations and Middle Eastern Studies), employed full-time as Regional Assistant Mashreq in Denmark;
- Rami Salhi (graduate in Sociology), employed part-time as Regional Consultant Maghreb in Tunisia;
- Anne-Sophie Jouanneau (graduate in Political Sciences), employed full-time as Regional Coordinator Maghreb until July 2015, and subsequently replaced by Slim Bouzid (graduate in Political Sciences) in Tunisia;
- Tej El Houda Trad (graduate in Business and IT), employed full-time as Regional Assistant Maghreb from June 2015 in Tunisia.

##### *Technical Staff:*

- Améline Jaskowiak (graduate in International Economics), employed full-time as Head of Unit Administration and Finances in Denmark;
- Karin Søndergaard (graduate in Accounting), employed part-time as Chief Accountant in Denmark;
- Julia García Han (graduate in Economics), employed full-time as Administrative Officer from February 2015 in Denmark.

Syreen Forest (graduate in Middle Eastern Studies) and subsequently Ahmed Al Haik (graduate in International and European Law) were also employed full-time as Interns to support the work of the Programme and Technical teams in Denmark over the course of 2015.

The EMHRF has also entered into a renewed formal partnership with EuroMed Rights, which notably covers the issues of the sharing of offices and related expenses.<sup>28</sup>

Finally, the audit of the Foundation's accounts was performed by the Copenhagen office of *Deloitte*.

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<sup>28</sup> This arrangement is made so as to regulate and minimize the administrative costs of both organisations.

## Appendix: Synopsis of Grants Applications in 2015

### 1. Overview of the Number of Grants Applications

In 2015, the Foundation received and dealt with **423** grants applications.

| Per Status:     |     |     |
|-----------------|-----|-----|
| <i>Granted</i>  | 84* | 20% |
| <i>Rejected</i> | 301 | 71% |
| <i>Pending</i>  | 38  | 9%  |

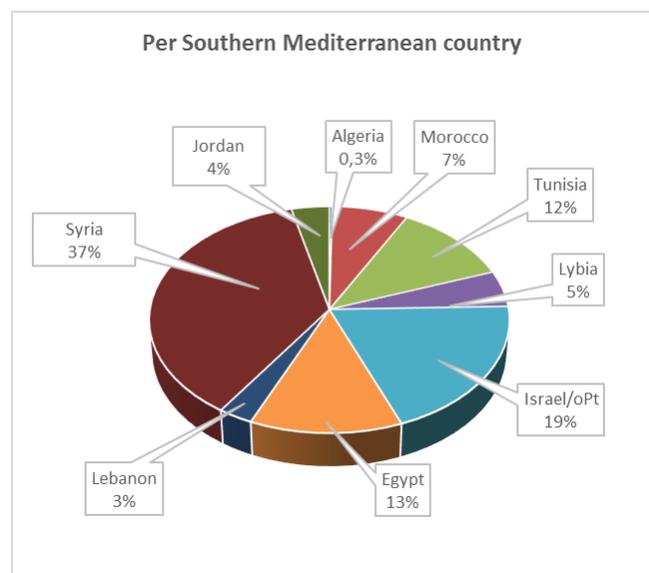
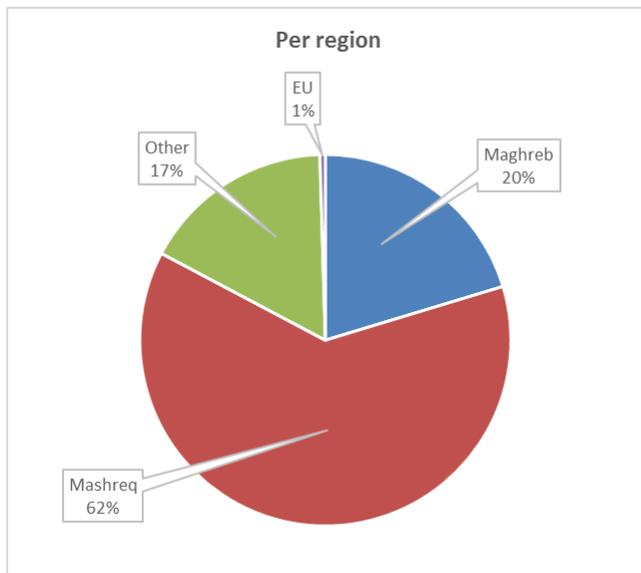
\*This figure does not include the grantees who applied during the last quarter of 2014.

| Per Type:        |     |     |
|------------------|-----|-----|
| <i>Urgent</i>    | 125 | 30% |
| <i>Strategic</i> | 234 | 55% |
| <i>Inquiry</i>   | 64  | 15% |

The total amount granted by the Foundation in 2015 was **€ 1,387,65.72**

### 2. Geographic Distribution

**349** applications came from the Southern Mediterranean region (representing 83% of all applications received).



### 3. Reasons for Rejection

Three main reasons that have justified the ineligibility of the proposals received are:

- The activities suggested in the application fall outside the scope of the promotion or defence of universally-recognised human rights standards. These applications accounted for **26%** of all proposals rejected.
- The application does not fall or encompass human rights activities within the geographical mandate of the Foundation, i.e. Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel. These applications accounted for **24%** of all proposals rejected.
- The applicant is a well-established NGO which has not experienced any problem in securing funding from mainstream donors. These applications accounted for **13%** of all proposals rejected.

However, in the case where the application does not fall within the mandate of the Foundation, the Secretariat still provides information and advices to the applicant to contact other potential donors better positioned to support the proposal. This is more specifically the case for proposals dealing with threatening situations facing human rights defenders in another region or with specialised areas of intervention, such as the media.

These ineligible applications that have been redirected to other potential partners and donors accounted for **28%** of all applications rejected.

### 4. Average Response Time

As a rule, the Foundation aims at making sound and rapid decisions related to the applications received.

The interval between the reception of the application and the answer provided by the Foundation is reflected in the chart below:

|                                     |                |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Total Average Response Time*</b> | <b>14 days</b> |
| ✓ <i>for urgent request</i>         | 8 days         |
| ✓ <i>for strategic application</i>  | 29 days        |
| ✓ <i>for inquiry</i>                | 6 days         |

\*This total relates to 90% of the applications.