



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

# **Activity Report**

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## SIGRID RAUSING TRUST



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## 1. Introductory summary

In 2016, the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders (EMHRF) carried out 131 interventions to protect and strengthen the activities of defenders and civil society actors in the Arab region, in view of their central role in democratisation processes and in combatting impunity, inequalities and other drivers of radicalisation.

The Foundation recorded a **15% increase in interventions compared with 2015**, particularly in Egypt, where the authorities strive to suppress the work of independent civil society.

**74% of the Foundation's interventions were carried out in countries in armed conflict situations, in increasingly hostile environments or where the space for defenders and civil society is closing**, such as Syria, Egypt, Algeria, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. Over a third of the Foundation's partners have been subjected to threats or arbitrary measures, in breach of the right to freedom of association.

The results of these interventions are encouraging: about 50 defenders, 28% of whom are women, and their families have avoided threats against their lives and safety, and 72% of them have resumed their activities. Furthermore, documented reports on gross human rights violations in the countries concerned have been produced and submitted to United Nations treaty bodies, and legal assistance and representation was provided to more than 1,630 victims of violations, notably defenders and women.

*A defender arbitrarily detained by governmental forces in **Syria** received urgent support to cover the cost of legal representation services that led to his release in December 2016. He immediately resumed documenting human rights violations in the North-East of the country.*

*Thirteen defenders from **Egypt** were able to avoid being arbitrarily arrested because of their human rights work and subjected to long prison sentences in their country, thanks to emergency relocation grants abroad.*

*A women's rights network of 20 activists in **Libya** was created thanks to seed funding from the Foundation in 2016. The network provided legal and psychosocial assistance to 111 women victims of violence in Benghazi, El Beida, Darna, Shahat, Al Koufra and Tobrouk in less than six months.*

In addition, **23% of the Foundation's interventions aimed at strengthening the core operations of innovative or emerging civil society initiatives working mainly with vulnerable populations in Morocco and Tunisia** to combat marginalisation and discrimination, and fill the gaps in human rights protection. 71% of the Foundation's interventions in these countries were carried out in remote regions, where access to economic and social development and to human rights remains a priority.

The results of the support are particularly compelling, as illustrated by the examples below.

*Beyond raising awareness and training about three thousand young people and women on economic and social rights, **two support units and counselling centres for rural women** were established in Tunisia's Jendouba Governorate and in Morocco's Souss-Massa-Drâa region to offer administrative, legal and psychosocial support to women victims of violence and discrimination. **Citizens' clubs were also open for children and young people** in schools and high schools in Tunis, Jendouba, Gafsa, Sfax and Sousse governorates in Tunisia.*

*Seizing the opportunity offered by Morocco's new migration policy, **a unique Moroccan Platform composed of about 15 newly registered migrants' associations** was established through seed funding from the Foundation, to contribute to the recognition of the rights of migrants, combat discrimination and promote their integration in Morocco. The Foundation was also instrumental in bringing other donors on board to support this innovative initiative.*

*Based on the collection of almost a thousand photos and 800 videos by a group of civil society activists throughout Tunisia in 2016, **an outstanding document library on the 2011 'Arab Spring' was completed and formally handed to the National Archives in Tunis** in March 2017. Soon to be made available to the public, the library will be used to strengthen scientific research on these developments.*

The Foundation made it a priority to cover **operating costs, i.e. rental and human resources costs** that are rarely supported by other donors, so as to offer civil society actors the opportunity to sustain their activities. Operating costs made up 75% of all costs covered by the Foundation in 2016.<sup>1</sup>

Beyond this direct support, the Foundation also assisted its partners to reach out to other donors, which proved to be successful for **56% of them that secured additional funding** and ensured -at least in part- the sustainability of their activity.

The Foundation also increased its support to **youth and women leadership in the region**, representing almost half of the objectives of the beneficiaries, in view of their central role in democratisation processes.<sup>2</sup>

Lastly, the Foundation continued to strengthen its collaboration with key stakeholders in the field of protection and support to human rights defenders and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the region, to strengthen and expand support opportunities. Beyond its commitments towards the [European Union Human Rights Defenders Mechanism](#), the Foundation contributed to the **establishment of a working group on the Middle-East and North Africa within networks of international human rights foundations** and it participated in and organised several meetings to develop **a common response to civil society criminalisation and closing space for action**.

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

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<sup>1</sup> The protection needs of defenders in the region, including health care, basic resources for families and urgent/temporary relocation, represent 15% of the costs covered. The remaining 10% supported projects, notably timely or innovative ones, that didn't require operating costs to be developed.

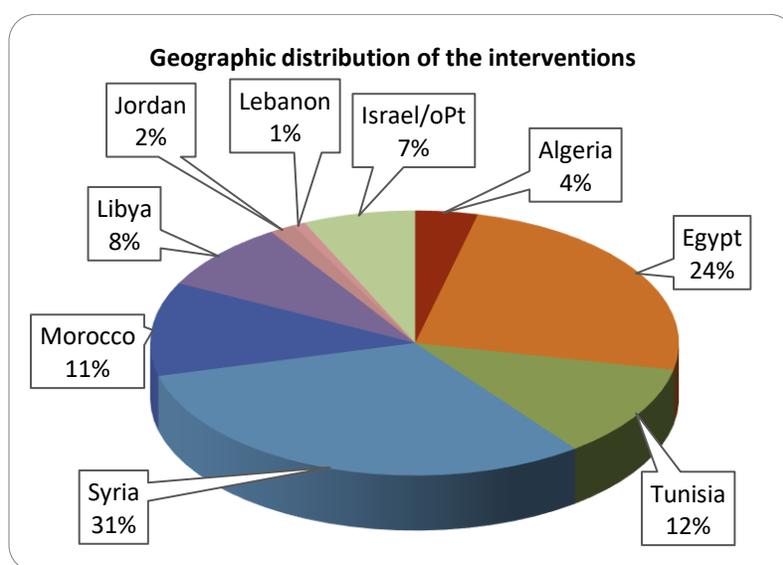
<sup>2</sup> In particular, 39% of the interventions were committed to defend women rights and to strengthen women human rights defenders' leadership.

## 2. Direct interventions to support NGOs, groups and individual defenders

The Foundation carried out 131 interventions to support 134 defenders (84 civil society organisations and 50 individual defenders) working to promote respect for human rights in the Southern Mediterranean region.<sup>3</sup>

40% of the Foundation's direct interventions were made in an emergency context to protect the lives of defenders, while 60% aimed at strengthening the functioning of groups or associations that do not have access to traditional sources of funding. The total amount of support granted is of 1.6 million Euros.<sup>4</sup>

As illustrated by the breakdown of grants by country provided below, Syria continues to be a major country of intervention and Egypt has been a significant recipient of support in 2016 compared to 2015:



Support is distributed in two main categories: urgent interventions to protect and support individual defenders, and flexible interventions to support emerging organisations and sensitive initiatives in the regional context.<sup>5</sup>

### **2.1. Urgent interventions to protect and support individual defenders**

<sup>3</sup> In 2016, the Foundation received 616 funding and information requests from human rights defenders, against 421 the year before. Most of the requests were from Syria, Egypt, Libya, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, which represent 58% of all requests received in 2016. After a strict verification process that follows the main eligibility criteria available on the Foundation's website, the Board allocated emergency and flexible support to 21% of the requests. 3% of the Foundation's beneficiaries are members of EuroMed Rights.

<sup>4</sup> This amount represents 76% of the Foundation's annual budget.

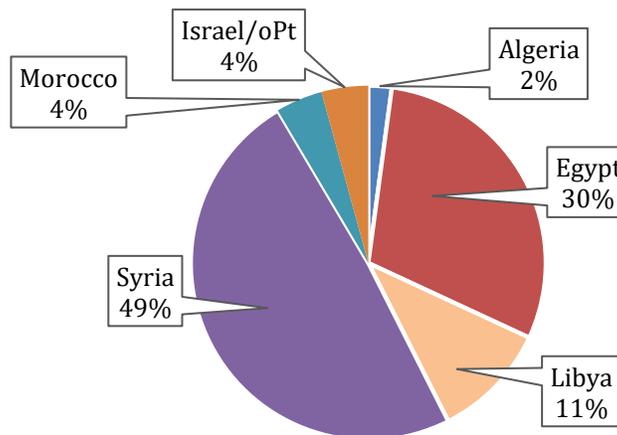
<sup>5</sup> The Foundation set up two mechanisms to respond as flexibly as possible to the needs expressed by defenders: an emergency response mechanism, through which the Board can decide to allocate grants of €5,000 (with a maximum of 20% of overhead costs, i.e. €6,000 in total) in less than ten days, and a mechanism based on regular consultations of Board members at their annual meetings, through which requests of up to €40,000 are considered.

In 2016, the Foundation granted urgent support to help or protect 50 individual defenders, 28% of which were women, and their families. 96% of them were at risk or facing highly challenging circumstances because of their activities to promote human rights in the region, in Syria, Egypt, Libya, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories (OPT), Algeria and Morocco, among others.

The Foundation also provided support to two defenders to fulfil urgent initiatives, including the publication of a multidisciplinary research study on inheritance in Morocco and to carry out an advocacy mission before a regional human rights mechanism calling for justice for victims of violations in Egypt.

As shown in the graph below, the vast majority of the Foundation's urgent support was awarded to Syrian and Egyptian defenders in view of the serious nature of the threats they are subjected to in their countries. Support to Egyptian defenders notably increased by 56% compared to 2015.

**Distribution of grants to individuals per country**



More specifically, the Foundation provided grants to protect:

- Nine defenders, mainly Syrians but also Libyans and Palestinians, and their families who feared for their lives, through **medical care and psychosocial assistance** in their countries of origin or abroad.
- Thirteen Syrian defenders, thirteen Egyptians, one Libyan, one Palestinian, one Algerian and one Moroccan, who were forced to leave their countries because of threats, were provided support to **temporarily relocate to a foreign country** so as to live safely and pursue their activism.<sup>6</sup>
- Five Syrian defenders, one Egyptian defender and one Libyan defender and their families under constant harassment were provided with support **to cover their basic needs in their countries of origin**. They used the Foundation's grants to take steps to avoid being threatened, such as moving to another city, and continue their work.
- Two defenders who were **arbitrarily detained** in Syria and Egypt received support to obtain **legal representation** and meet their **basic needs** in view of their and their families' precarious situations.

<sup>6</sup> However, the EMHRF remains vigilant about the draining effect that the resettlement of defenders in other countries could cause.

One of the Foundation's main objectives is to offer defenders in a difficult or dangerous situation prospects for mid and long term support for their activities. To this aim, it coordinated its interventions with partners to:

- Support eight defenders from Syria, Libya and Egypt in the framework of solidarity action taken by regional and international organisations (urgent appeals, letters to support asylum and resettlement requests, press releases, trial observation missions, meetings with officials, etc.);
- Identify, assist in drafting and sponsor several scholarship applications to protect Egyptian defenders under threat; five applications were successful. The EMHRF also established a database gathering scholarship opportunities that defenders from the region could access and benefit from in the future;
- Define means for strengthening programmes for the relocation of threatened defenders in Europe and in the Southern Mediterranean region, including through internships with NGOs, with the members of the European Union Platform on 'temporary relocation programmes for human rights defenders' managed by *ProtectDefenders.eu*;
- Encourage seven financial partners, in particular the members of the European Union Human Rights Defenders mechanism *ProtectDefenders.eu*, to cover additional costs related to the basic needs or the resettlement of nine human rights defenders abroad.

Overall, the **results of the urgent interventions** are encouraging:

- Forty defenders and their families escaped threats to their lives and security as they received rapid grants. For example, a defender who was arbitrarily detained by government forces in Syria was provided access to a lawyer's services and was released in December 2016. He immediately resumed documenting human rights violations in Syria's North-East. Thirteen Egyptian defenders were also able to avoid being arbitrarily arrested and subjected to long prison sentences in their country thanks to emergency relocation grants.
- 72% of the beneficiaries were able to resume or continue carrying out their activities, in particular those who were relocated to neighbouring countries. Most of them took the opportunity of being relocated to continue defending human rights in their own country. For example, a Syrian defender living in Turkey found employment with a humanitarian organisation while carrying out interviews with former detainees and family members of missing persons in Syria whose cases were brought to the United Nations Human Rights Council in the framework of the universal periodic review. An Egyptian defender also found a new post with a foundation while writing a book on women rights.
- Five Syrian defenders, two Libyan defenders and five Egyptian defenders have applied for or were granted asylum and obtained work permits in Europe and the United States.
- 26% of the beneficiaries obtained scholarship grants abroad or received training in the field of human rights, journalism, project management and languages to increase their skills and their employment opportunities in the longer run. For example, an Algerian defender is preparing a master's degree in human rights in a French university and is writing a thesis on accountability and justice for victims of enforced disappearances.

However, as of the end of 2016, one defender continues to be arbitrarily detained by the Egyptian authorities after peacefully challenging the responsibility of the State for human rights violations, and another defender was arbitrarily banned from leaving the territory.

Lastly, a third Egyptian defender was refused a visa by a member state of the European Union in spite of having been enrolled in a university and having obtained a scholarship.

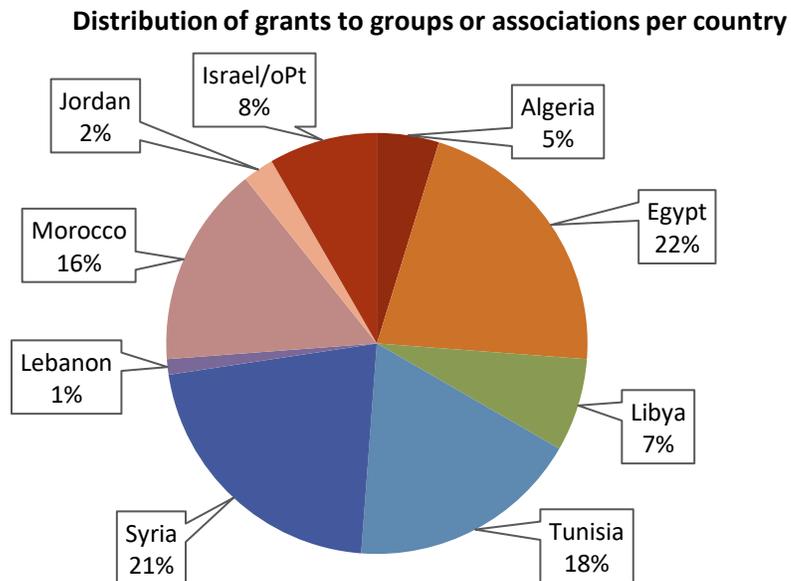
## **2.2. Interventions in support of emerging and sensitive projects in the regional context**

With a view to adapting interventions to different national developments and dynamics, the Foundation provided flexible support, *both on an urgent and regular basis*,<sup>7</sup> to 84 groups and non-governmental organisations that faced difficulties in securing funding or whose activity felt outside mainstream donor's priorities.

These grants were awarded either to well-established and reputable organisations that faced sudden financial shortfalls, in order to fill unexpected funding gaps, or to innovative initiatives that have recently been established, to support the start of activities.

Well-established associations facing difficulties made up 33% of the recipients of the Foundation's flexible support interventions, and 67% were new civil society initiatives.

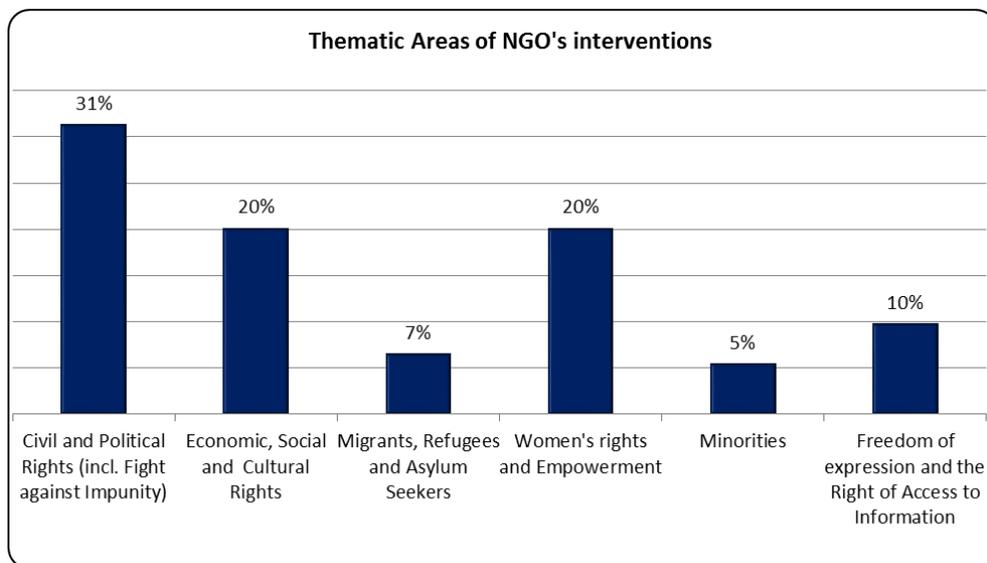
The activities of the supported groups or associations mainly took place in Egypt, Syria, Tunisia and Morocco, as illustrated in the graph below.



The activity of the Foundation's partners mainly focused on the following sectors:

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<sup>7</sup> Specifically, 7 of the 84 NGO beneficiaries received urgent support from the EMHRF in 2016.



In particular, the Foundation sought to respond to specific needs expressed by civil society actors in the six contexts and areas outlined below.<sup>8</sup>

### 2.2.1. Protecting Victims and Promoting Justice in Syria

The Foundation continued to focus its interventions on supporting Syrian civil society initiatives that aim at **calling for justice and accountability** and **providing assistance to victims of violations, namely women, young people, children, handicapped persons, displaced and refugee populations**.

In particular, the 18 supported initiatives focussed on the following specific objectives:

- To strengthen documentation of human rights violations perpetrated by all parties to the conflict and provide Syrian civil society members and victims with the opportunity to prosecute those responsible for human rights violations based on the principle of universal jurisdiction;
- To highlight civil society activities in support of the Syrian population and give defenders, academics and Syrian civil society stakeholders the opportunity to shed light on human rights issues in the conflict, including through research and innovative information websites;
- To provide shelter, psychological and legal assistance and rehabilitation services in Syria or in neighbouring countries to persons with disabilities, women and children victims of violations, and to encourage them to develop knowledge about fundamental rights through educational or cultural projects or income-generating activities.

### 2.2.2. Supporting Developing Human Rights Initiatives in Libya

<sup>8</sup> This report does not provide details about interventions in Jordan and in Lebanon because of their very small number.

The Foundation's interventions aimed at supporting Libyan human rights organisations to ***develop and sustain their activities aimed at defending and promoting respect for fundamental rights, and to report on violations of these rights.***

In particular, the Foundation provided support to six initiatives that pursued the following objectives:

- To report gross human rights violations, including cases of enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, attacks against journalists, women and migrants and to provide legal and psychological assistance to victims of violations;
- To promote dialogue between civil society organisations, local authorities and the representatives of tribes to guarantee the right to return of displaced populations, including in Tawargha, which was emptied of its 30,000 inhabitants in 2011;
- To promote freedom of expression and opinion through strengthening the status and capacities of Libyan journalists and raising awareness against hate speech.

### **2.2.3. Upholding the Resilience of the Independent Civil Society in Egypt**

In 2016, the Foundation's interventions mainly focused on ***upholding the resilience of the independent civil society movement who is facing unprecedented threats in Egypt*** by helping human rights defenders and their organisations to ***implement contingency strategies in the country or from abroad in order to continue documenting violations and assisting victims of the repression.***

In particular, the Foundation supported 18 organisations or individual initiatives seeking:

- To document mass human rights violations, including the crackdown against defenders and civil society, trade unions and students' movements, unfair trials and conditions of detention, violence against women, breaches of economic, social and cultural rights including corruption, violations of the rights of migrants and minorities and violations of the right to freedom of expression and opinion;
- To bring assistance to victims of human rights violations subjected to arbitrary investigations and/or sentences, including defenders and journalists, trade unionists and workers, peaceful demonstrators, students, minorities, migrants and refugees.

### **2.2.4. Maintaining a Space for Collective Action in Algeria**

In Algeria, the Foundation's interventions mainly aimed at ***maintaining a space for civil society actors to collectively act in support of victims of rights' violations and marginalization at the local and national levels.***

In particular, the four supported civil society initiatives have had the following objectives:

- To implement a joint strategy to call for the repeal of the January 2012 law on associations, and ensure freedom of association in Algeria;
- To increase the communication skills of civil society actors, in particular those who work on migration issues and provide support to migrants and refugees, to enable them to provide information on the situation and violations they are facing in the country;
- To set up new interactive civil society initiatives to raise awareness on citizenship issues and reduce marginalisation of the Algerian youth, including in the North-Eastern regions.

### **2.2.5. Protecting Civil Society At-Risk in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**

The Foundation focused its interventions on providing **bridge funding to endangered or exposed civil society organisations that strive to document, prevent and respond to human rights violations** in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. These associations were notably facing arbitrary measures, defamation campaigns and financial difficulties.

In particular, the mission of the seven supported NGOs was the following:

- To report human rights violations, the involvement of Israeli and international companies in the occupation of Palestinian and Syrian territories, and the destruction of houses and population displacement to the media, including social media, and UN mechanisms;
- To promote respect for women's rights and empowerment in Palestinian communities in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza by providing them with legal assistance and by promoting their role in the media;
- To promote diversity and combat violence against young LGBTQI individuals in the Palestinian territories;
- To provide access to information for refugees and African migrants about their rights and to legal, psychological and educational assistance in Jerusalem.

### **2.2.6. Strengthening Local Emerging Associations in Tunisia and Morocco**

Beyond the differences and complexities of the democratic transition processes taking place in each of the two countries, the Foundation continued to give priority to strengthening the core operations of **new associations to promote the rights and convey the claims of marginalised persons, in particular young people and women in remote regions of these countries, in the framework of the ongoing reform and decentralisation processes.**

In particular, the Foundation supported 15 Tunisian and 13 Moroccan initiatives that pursued the following specific objectives:

- To combat economic and social marginalization, inequalities and other drivers of radicalisation of young people and women, and to raise awareness about their rights so that they may influence decentralisation processes and withstand radicalisation to violence through communication campaigns and educational, artistic and cultural activities;
- To put forward public policy reforms that integrate, for the most part, the claims of women and youth in the fields of justice, equality, economic, social and cultural rights including the right to health, education and local development;
- To defend individual rights, especially the rights of victims of discrimination and violence against migrants, women and lesbians, gay, transgender and intersexed by providing them with support and safe spaces.

### **2.2.7. Follow-up and outcomes of interventions in support of emerging and sensitive projects**

As an intermediary and adviser to its beneficiaries, the Foundation:

- Encouraged and helped 30 newly formed groups, representing 36% of its NGO beneficiaries, to draft action plans and proposals to enable the Foundation, in conjunction with other partners, to strategically respond to their needs;
- Coached 12 new partners, in particular those working in Tunisia's remote regions, by providing them with strategic advice on democratic management of associations, project implementation and sustainability prospects in cooperation with EuroMed Right's regional office;
- Encouraged 49% of its beneficiaries, namely 41 NGOs, to build and maintain ties with other groups and institutions working on similar themes at the local, national and regional levels. Contacts between organisations aimed at fostering information exchange and experience sharing, identify synergies and coordinated actions, with a view to offering them additional support, other than financial, that could contribute to disseminating and sustaining their activities;
- Participated in consultations aimed at strengthening convergence between the programmes offered by technical and financial partners in Tunisia;<sup>9</sup>
- Coordinated its interventions on Syria with EuroMed Rights, which enabled six of the Foundation's NGO beneficiaries to take part in meetings and trainings organised by the latter;
- Organised a meeting in April 2016 between the main representatives of a Syrian human rights association, recently exiled for security reasons, and financial partners to explain the association's new positions and develop a coordinated and complementary approach for donors to respond to its need of development and sustainability;
- Coordinated its interventions in Libya with the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) to strengthen the role of Libyan civil society in influencing the human rights components of the political agreement from December 2015;
- Participated in consultations to develop a joint approach to support and advocate for upholding the resilience of the Egyptian civil society movement in the current repressive context;
- Facilitated the exchange of contacts, acted as an intermediary, forwarded a list of potential donors and/or assisted in drafting funding applications for 56% of its beneficiaries, 47 NGOs in total. In addition, the Foundation directly helped several applicants whose activities fell outside the scope of its mandate but could be of interest and may be supported by other donors by referring them to the latter.

It is difficult to assess the overall outcome of the support awarded to these groups and NGOs at this stage. However, some of the main effects the activities of the Foundation's partners have had in 2016 are highlighted below:

- ***Legal assistance and representation services were provided in Egypt, Syria, Libya, Israel and Morocco to more than 1,630 victims of human rights violations, including in remote regions of these countries.*** For example, 384 women victims of violence in Morocco received legal and psychological assistance through a support centre that was recently set up in the region of Agadir Souss-Massa-Draâ.

<sup>9</sup> Among the members of the group are the French Institute in Tunisia, the Fondation de France and the Tunisian Civil Society Support Programme (PASC).

- **Documented reports on human rights violations in Egypt, Syria, Libya, Israel, Morocco and Tunisia were developed by NGOs and forwarded to UN mechanisms.** In Syria, Libya and Egypt, the reports included documented cases of enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, violence against women and minorities, prosecution of civilians before military courts and violations and threats against human rights defenders and journalists. Most of the reports were communicated to the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, the Commission of Inquiry on Syria, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya and Special Rapporteurs on the situation of human rights defenders, the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of association. A report on the direct involvement of Israeli banks in settlements in the Palestinian territories was also drafted. Furthermore, several Moroccan and Tunisian associations coordinated efforts and contributed to producing joint shadow reports on the human rights situation in Morocco and on the violations of LGBT rights in Tunisia, in the framework of the Universal Periodic Review carried out by the UN Human Rights Council.
- **Two new information platforms were created, online and on social media, to publicise civil society activities in support of the Syrian population, and to provide a space for Syrian defenders and academics to voice their claims publicly** by shedding light on the issues at stake in the conflict in the field of human rights. One of these new websites gathered more than 350,000 visits, and its social media account gained 221,000 followers in less than six months.
- More than **700 displaced women and children, victims of violations and war-related trauma in Syria were provided with shelter and psychological support and rehabilitation sessions** by civil society actors in several towns in Rif Dimashq and Lattakia governorates.
- **Analyses and recommendations were drafted by civil society to further harmonise the Tunisian and Egyptian legislation with the international conventions ratified by these states.** They include recommendations to amend three restrictive bills that were discussed by various parliamentary committees in Egypt between April and December 2016. For example, the Law on Civil Service that was adopted by the Egyptian House of Representatives on 25 July 2016 took into account several recommendations issued by civil society, in particular those on legal procedures and the appointment and redundancy standards applicable to civil servants. Other recommendations were submitted by Tunisian associations to call for reforming the personal status code, repealing articles 230 and 227 of the penal code (respectively criminalising sexual intercourse between consenting persons of the same gender and authorising minors to get married) and strengthening the preventive aspects of law No. 52 of 1992 on drugs.
- The vast majority of **Tunisian and Moroccan civil society stakeholders supported developed partnership with national authorities**, such as the ministries of Culture, Education and Youth in Tunisia, and the Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights in Morocco, as well as with national institutions including the National Anti-Corruption Institution (INLCC) in Tunisia and the National Human Rights Council and its regional commissions in Morocco.
- Many Moroccan associations also became parties to the **Moroccan coalition on climate justice and the youth conference**, and by doing so they strengthened their position at the international level to develop climate action plans in the framework of the climate change conference COP 22 that was held in Marrakesh in November 2016.
- **A first interactive NGO platform was created in Algeria's North-Eastern region** in 2016 with a view to coordinating associations activities, and training and advocacy opportunities that aim at combatting youth marginalisation and raise awareness on citizens' issues in the region.

- A ‘good practice’ guide to ***strengthen the legal, digital and health protection of people whose sexual orientation is criminalised in Tunisia***, a status inconsistent with the new Constitution, was produced and widely disseminated amongst the LGBTQ community and human rights associations.
- ***Five Libyan beneficiary organisations are members of Libya’s civil society coalition***, established in September 2016, that gathers 16 human rights associations. The coalition drafted joint recommendations to influence human rights policies in Libya and before international bodies such as the European Union, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya and the International Commission of Inquiry on Libya.
- 32% of the NGOs which were granted support, including in Egypt, Algeria, Israel and Libya, were or are subjected to investigations or arbitrary proceedings in breach of the right to freedom of association, as enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Foundation awarded them bridging grants to enable them to ***develop backup plans, maintain staff and a physical presence*** as essential prerequisites to their resilience and the sustainability of their activities to uphold human rights in their countries.
- Through ***close co-operation between the Foundation and its international partners***, several beneficiaries received technical and/or financial support from EuroMed Rights, the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), the European Endowment for Democracy (EED), Frontline Defenders, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), 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), the Open Society Foundation (OSF), the Sigrid Rausing Trust, Oxfam Novib, the Technical Cooperation and Development Support Agency (ACTED), the Fund for Global Human Rights, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), the United Nations Development Programme (PNUD), International Media Support (IMS) as well as foreign representations and EU delegations, amongst others.
- ***56% of the NGO beneficiaries secured additional funding*** and ensured sustainability for their activities, at least partly. In more than half of the cases, the Foundation acted as a direct intermediary and assisted its partners in submitting funding requests to other donors.

In spite of these positive outcomes, about ten beneficiaries from Egypt, Syria, Libya, Jordan and Algeria experienced difficulties and delays in the implementation of and reporting on their activities due to a volatile situation in these countries.

For instance, a Syrian association was the target of bombings and had to use part of the Foundation’s support to move offices, bring medical assistance to injured staff and replace damaged equipment. In such extreme cases, the Foundation adopted a flexible approach anticipating the fact that the activities could not be fully implemented within the set deadline, and allowed the organisations to develop contingency plans.

### **3. Indirect interventions in support of NGOs, groups and individual defenders**

Beyond direct financial interventions, the Foundation strengthened its presence at the local level to closely monitor the development of the defender's activities, and it participated in meetings with institutions, NGOs and donors on financing and sustaining human rights activism in the region.

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

The Foundation maintained its physical presence in Tunisia and it organised several consultations and visits to remain attuned to civil society developments and needs in the region.

##### **3.1.1. Maghreb: reinforced presence in Tunisia and consultations with Algeria and Libya's civil society**

The Foundation's regional mission for the Maghreb, based in Tunisia, organised **three field visits in the governorates of Gabes, Kebili, Medenine, Tozeur, Siliana, El Kef, Jendouba and Beja** to carry out prospective work, review problems met and needs of emerging associations in the fields of development and assistance. Thanks to these visits, 7 emerging associations were granted seed support and received tailored coaching and advice on management, project planning and implementation.

Moreover, the Foundation took part in **regular meetings of the working group on Libya**, coordinated by the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) with a view to increasing collaboration and information sharing between Libyan and international NGOs.

Lastly, a **visit was carried out to Algeria**, during which the Foundation met with representatives of 13 local associations to review civil society dynamics, in particular in the regions outside of Algiers. Following the visit, three new and innovative civil society initiatives were granted seed support.

##### **3.1.2. Mashreq: visits to Syria's neighbouring countries and consultations with Egypt's civil society**

Although the Foundation has not established a physical presence in the Mashreq region because of the precarious security situation, it organised **a visit to several cities in Turkey** (Gaziantep, Ankara and Istanbul) in November 2016. This visit allowed meeting 25 Syrian associations, well-informed partners and donors, in order to gain deeper understanding of the dynamics, challenges and needs of Syrian civil society organisations in Turkey as well as assessing gaps and identifying funding opportunities for the latter. In view of stagnating or decreasing support available to Syrian human rights defenders and organisations, the Foundation confirmed its current focus on protection of victims and support to initiatives calling for justice.

Moreover, the Foundation **maintained regular exchanges with the Egyptian civil society** throughout the year. It also took part in meetings with international organisations to develop a coordinated approach.

### **3.2. Collaborations to strengthen financial support for human rights defenders**

The Foundation also played an active role in meetings with institutions, NGOs and donors with a view to securing long-term financial support for defenders in the region. Through these meetings, a working group on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) was established within networks of international foundations and joint recommendations were developed to combat criminalisation and the closing space for civil society in the region.

#### **3.2.1. Establishing a working group on the MENA within private foundations networks**

The Foundation participated in annual meetings of Ariadne, the European network of social justice and human rights foundations<sup>10</sup> and of the International Human Rights Funders' Group (IHRFG)<sup>11</sup> that were organised in March and July. In the framework of these meetings, the Foundation took part in consultations to assess the interest of several foundations to set up a working group on the Middle East and North Africa region, based on the findings of research that analyse the low level of funding for human rights activities in the region.<sup>12</sup>

Moderated by the Global Fund for Women, the Sigrid Rausing Trust and the Foundation, this working group was officially launched in October 2016. The group's objective is to bring together the foundations that provide support or are interested in providing support to the region's civil society, and discuss opportunities, caveats and the needs of civil society in order to jointly identify ways of increasing resources for local associations.<sup>13</sup>

#### **3.2.2. Coordinated response to combat criminalisation and the closing space for civil society**

The Foundation moderated a workshop on the shrinking space for civil society and representatives of European institutions at the southern neighbourhood civil society forum organised by the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) of the European Commission in May.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the Foundation organised an annual consultation meeting with several international foundations on the situation of human rights defenders and civil society actors in July, to discuss possible ways to protect and uphold the movement in the current context.

Lastly, the Foundation continued collaborating with the eleven other members of the European Union's Human Rights Defenders Mechanism, [ProtectDefenders.eu](http://ProtectDefenders.eu), funded by the European Commission, to offer a strategic and collaborative response to the needs of defenders and defenders' organisations in the field of protection,

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<sup>10</sup> [Ariadne](#) is a network of more than 600 philanthropists and foundations based in or operating from Europe that support organisations and initiatives in the field of social justice and human rights throughout the world. The Foundation has been a member of the Ariadne network since 2011 and is a member of the steering committee of a working group on crossborder philanthropy and of a specific foundations initiative for civil society, created in 2014.

<sup>11</sup> [IHRFG](#) is a network of international foundations that currently gathers more than 330 funding bodies and 1,200 philanthropists that support human rights globally. The Foundation is a member of IHRFG since 2010 and a founding member of its Working Group on human rights defenders established in 2011.

<sup>12</sup> The latest [study](#), which analyses data from 2014, shows that the Middle-East and North Africa lags behind almost all regions of the world, receiving only 3% of global private human rights funding and 9% of global bilateral and multilateral funding in 2014. Furthermore, the study witnessed a 4% drop in the level of support provided to human rights defenders between 2013 and 2014.

<sup>13</sup> Two proposals were submitted by the steering committee to hold meetings on the region in April and July 2017.

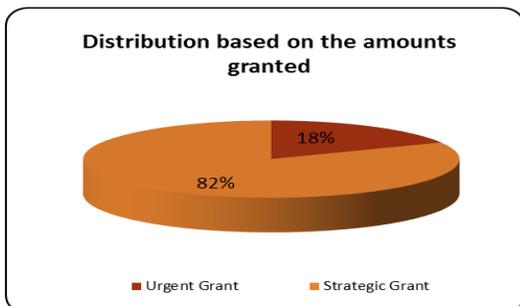
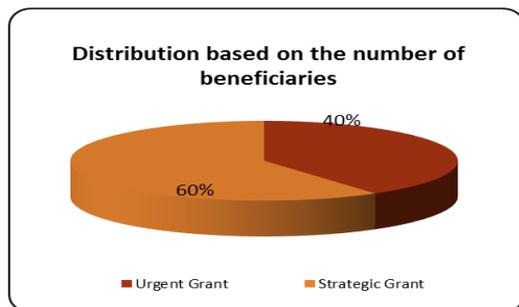
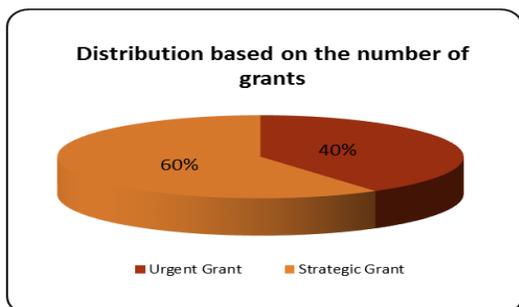
<sup>14</sup> This initiative was launched in 2013 and is part of an effort to provide a structured dialogue between civil society organisations on both sides of the Mediterranean and European institutions. Recommendations issued by civil society actors from the region at the workshop should be used to implement and define priorities for the European Union's new European Neighbourhood Policy.

assistance and training, amongst others. The Foundation met the mechanism’s members twice to assess the first year of activity and define strategic focus for its activity. The first annual meeting of the mechanism was held on 29-30 November 2016 under the theme of the [fight against criminalisation](#). Beyond highlighting the main achievements of the mechanism in its first year of existence, the meeting gave the opportunity to the beneficiaries to share experiences and knowledge on developing trends, and to issue recommendations to the mechanism and to the European Union.

#### 4. Quantified review of interventions

The following graphs provide a quantified summary of the grants allocated by the Foundation to defenders and NGOs in the region in 2016.

##### 4.1. Types of support allocated

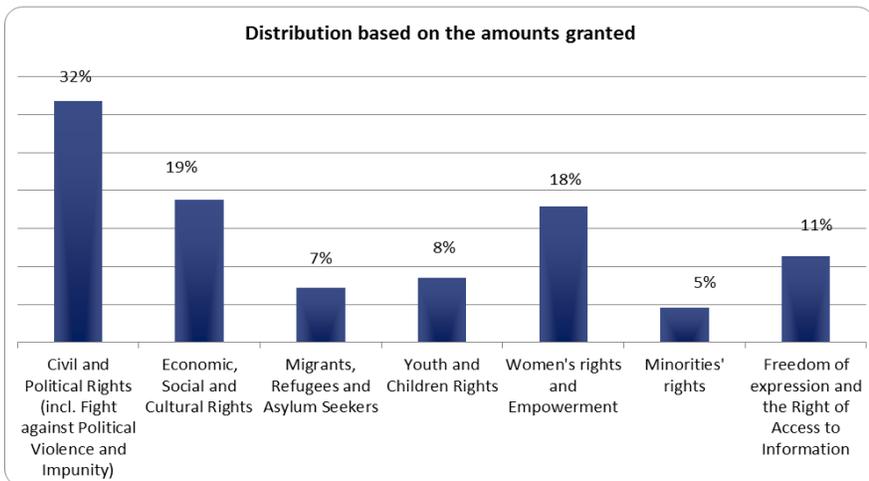
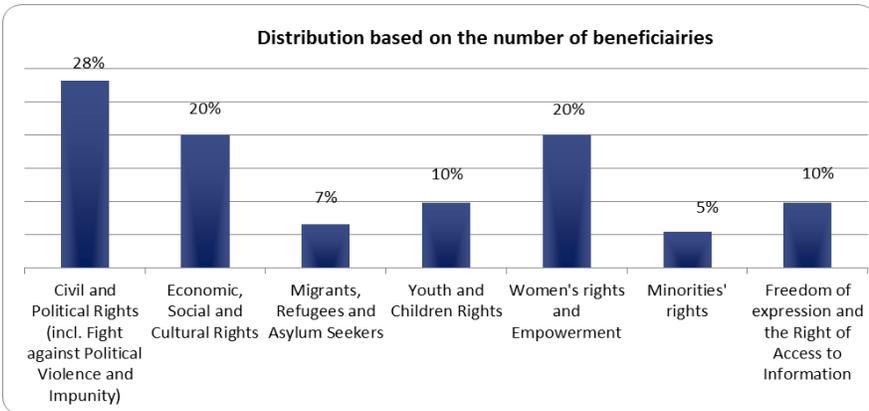
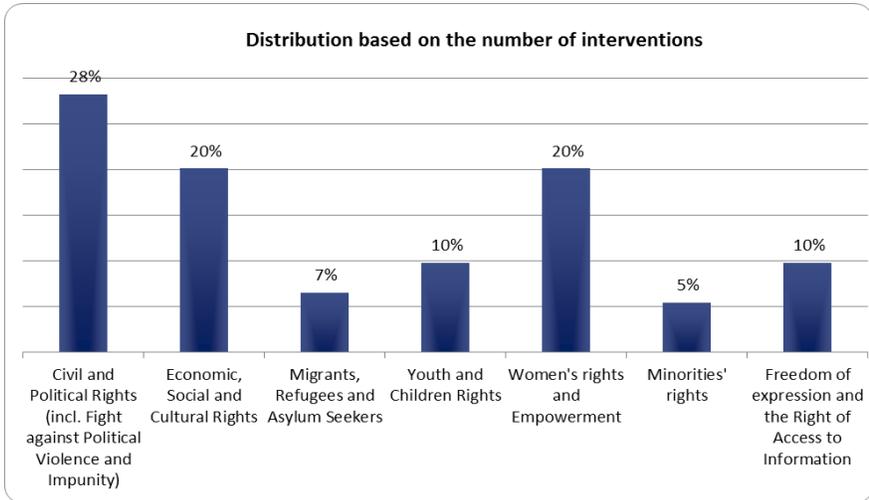


*Although they represent much lower sums of money than strategic or regular grants, the Foundation’s emergency interventions increased by 23% from 2015. They aimed at protecting the lives and security of defenders working in an increasingly hostile environment, in particular in Syria and Egypt.*

*40% of the Foundation’s grants were provided in an emergency situation, whereas 60% were allocated in the framework of biannual calls for proposals. Through these two support mechanisms, publicised [online](#), the Foundation was able to respond in a flexible way to both life-threatening and unforeseen situations.*

*The average amount of the grants allocated in 2016 is €12,136, slightly lower than in 2015. This figure not only highlights the significance of the grant rather than its value but also the limited budgetary means of the EMHRF.*

**4.2. Thematics covered by the beneficiaries**



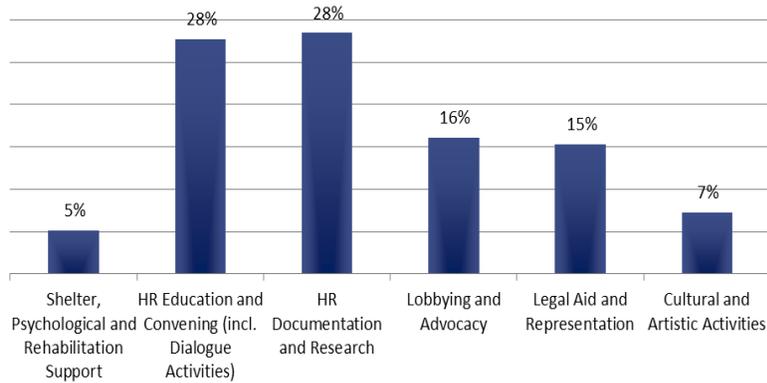
*The main focus of the Foundation's beneficiaries in 2016 were the fight against impunity and the promotion of reforms in the fields of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, which are both interdependent and priority issues for the fulfilment of human rights in the region. As a result, 51% of interventions were related to these issues.*

*Furthermore, in view of the central role of women and youth in establishing an effective and sustainable basis for democracy, the Foundation made it a priority to support youth and women's participation, leadership and rights through its interventions. This theme can be found in almost half of the objectives pursued by the NGOs that benefited from the Foundation's support in 2016.*

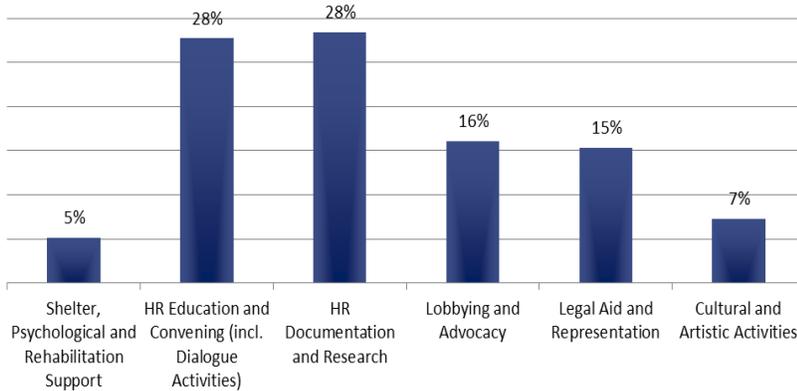
*Note: Some interventions may have been allocated to more than one category, as appropriate, in order to generate a comprehensive and relevant overview of all the thematics covered by the grants' beneficiaries.*

### 4.3. Activities of the beneficiaries

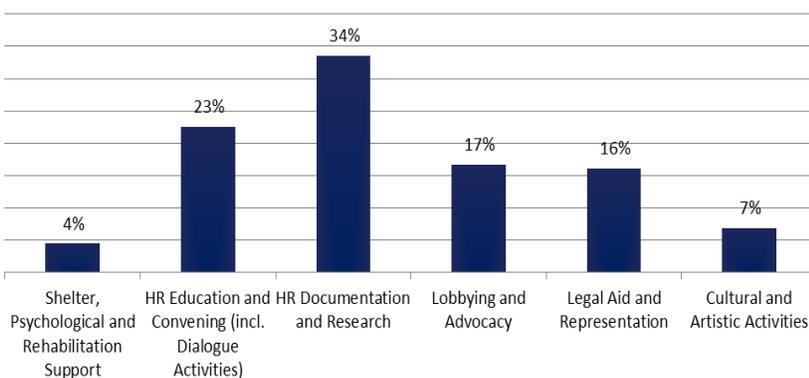
Distribution based on the number of interventions



Distribution based on the amount of beneficiaries



Distribution based on the amounts granted

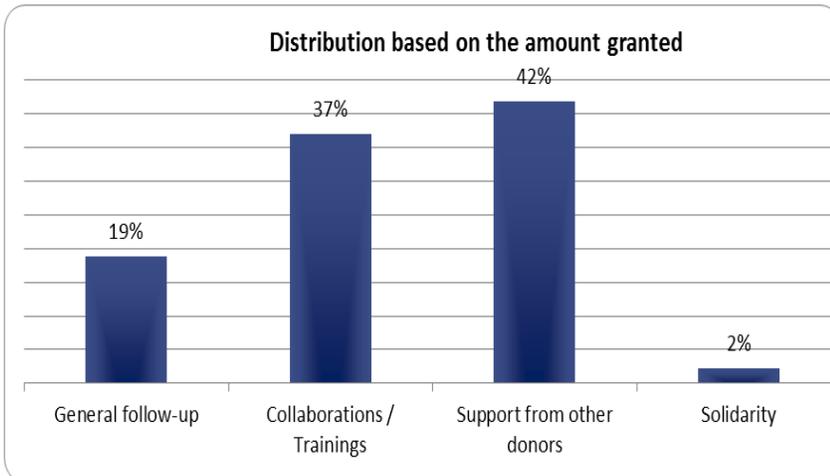
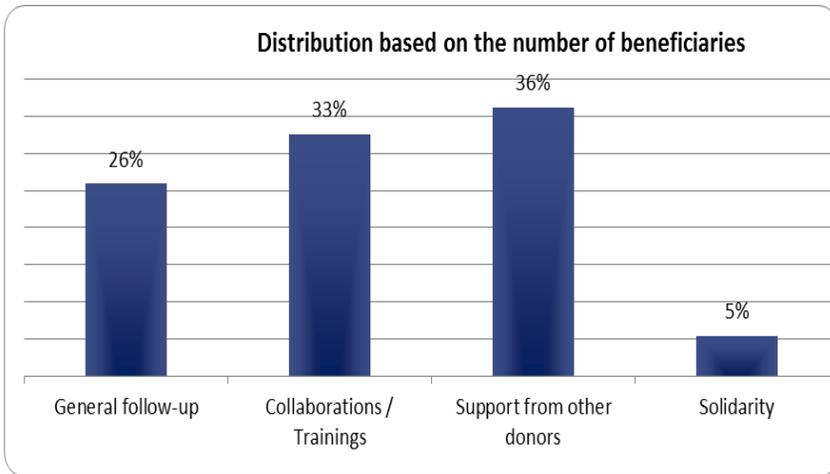
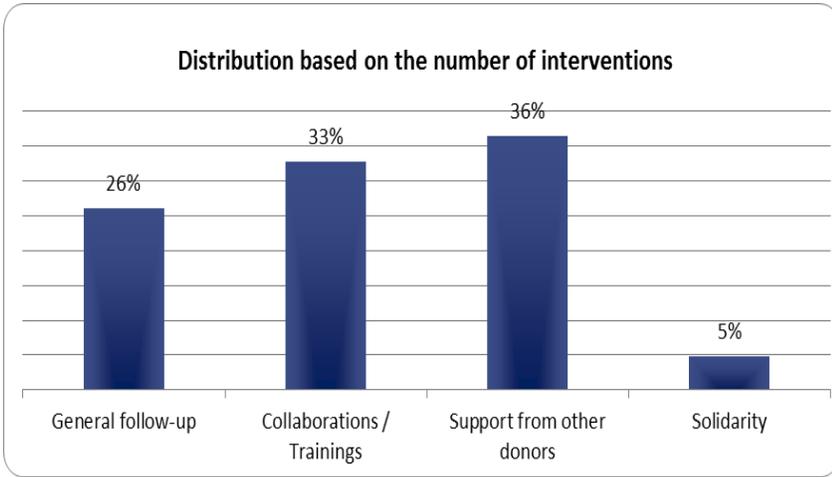


*The main part of the activities carried out by the Foundation's partners aimed at combatting impunity through documenting violations, providing medical and legal assistance to the victims and acting in justice on behalf of the latter. These activities, which are taking place in particularly hostile environments, make up 48% of all activities carried out by the Foundation's beneficiaries.*

*Moreover, complementary activities in the field of education, dialogue and advocacy, that are key to giving impetus to human rights reforms and transformation, represent 44% of the interventions of the Foundation's partners.*

*Lastly, the Foundation encouraged new and unifying approaches such as cultural and artistic activities, as alternatives to conventional tools to reach a broader and younger audience. New media, street theatre, music and popular arts are examples of innovative ways adopted by 7% of beneficiaries to disseminate the values of democracy, citizenship, justice and respect for human rights.*

**4.4. Type of follow-up undertaken**



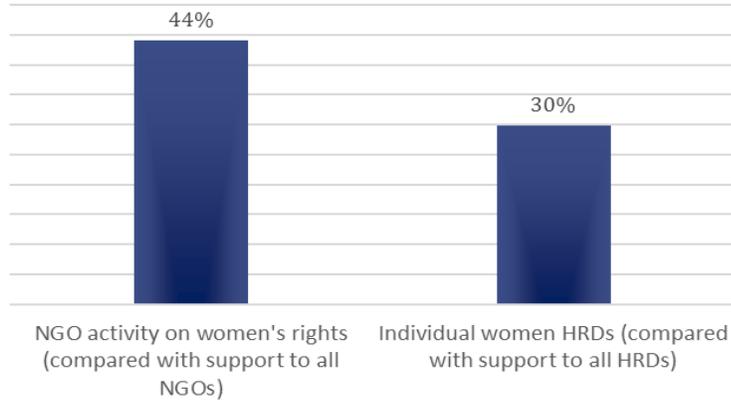
*In addition to providing funds, one of the Foundation's main objectives is to help the most vulnerable defenders and NGOs to pursue their mission in the long term. In this view, the Foundation specifically followed up on 74% of its financial interventions. In particular, it acted as an intermediary for its partners to strengthen their coordination and to access funding.*

*This type of follow-up is considered particularly important for emerging NGOs as it enables them to share information and experiences, benefit from new synergies that reduce isolation and increase the impact of their activities among the communities they serve.*

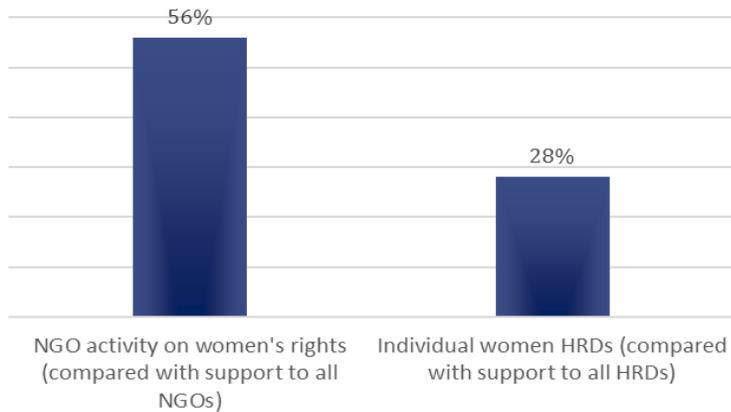
*In 56% of cases, the NGOs concerned by this specific follow-up secured funds from other institutions, which increased - at least in part - their sustainability prospects.*

#### 4.5. Gender

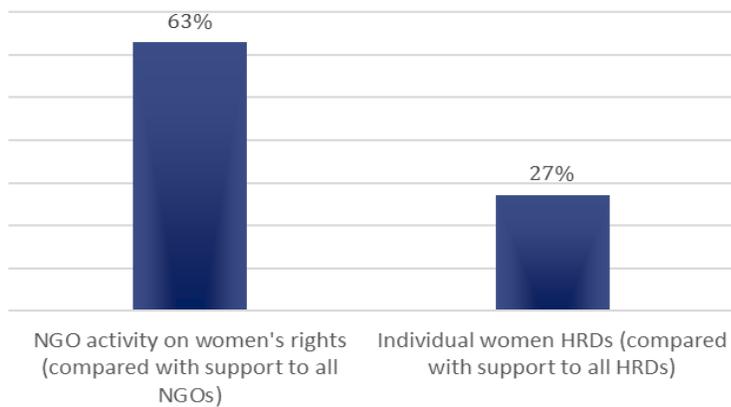
Distribution based on the number of interventions



Distribution based on the number of beneficiaries



Distribution based on the amounts granted



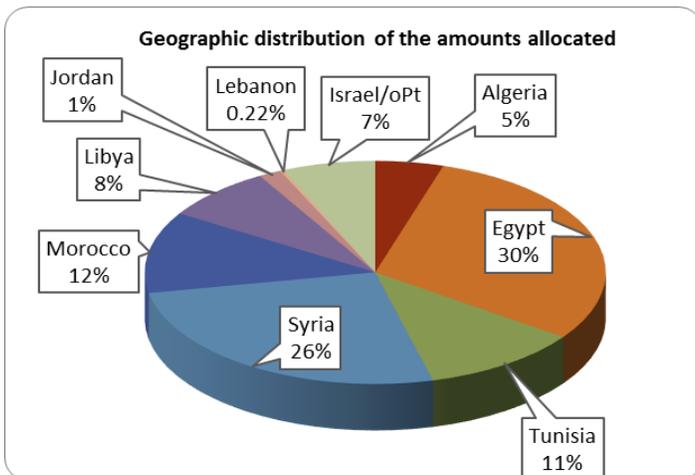
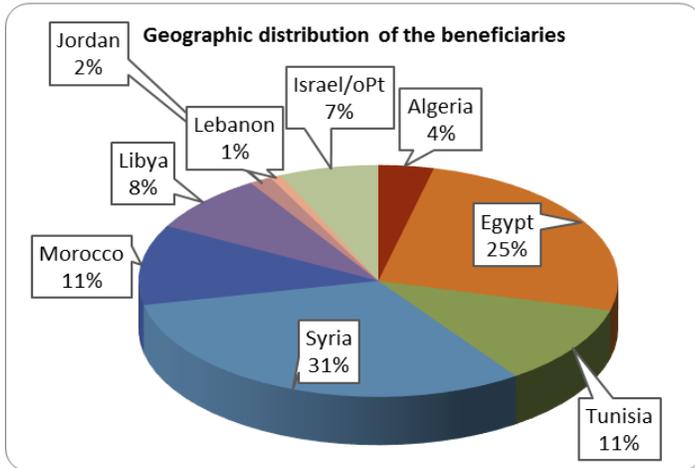
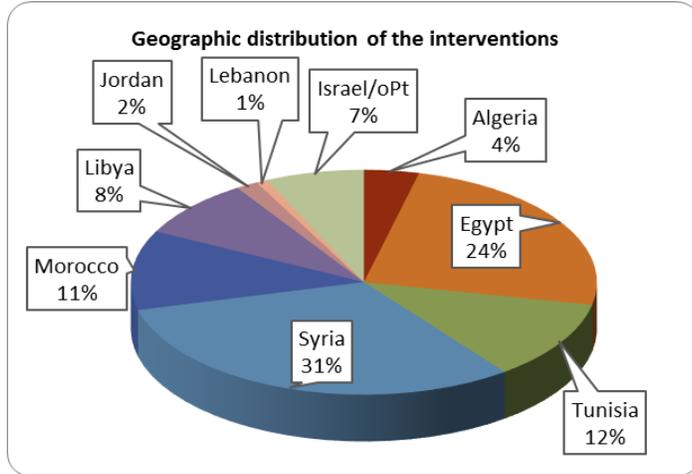
*Gender issues are an integral part of the Foundation's intervention strategy.*

*The situation of women and their specific role in human rights protection deserve special attention. Consequently, the Foundation values very highly projects related to gender parity and equality and those that aim at strengthening women's participation and leadership.*

*This issue is of vital importance in a regional environment where women are subjected to different forms of violence and are underrepresented in political and associative decision-making processes.*

*Considering their central role in democratisation processes, 39% of the Foundation's interventions were committed to strengthen their leadership and defend their rights this year.*

#### 4.6. Countries



The protracted war in Syria and the gradual suppression of independent civil society action in Egypt were at the top of the Foundation's concerns in 2016. Against a background of impunity, the Foundation's interventions focused on protecting defenders, documenting violations and assisting victims, principally defenders themselves and women. Interventions in support of Egyptian defenders and NGOs saw a 190% increase compared to 2015.

However, the Foundation did not overlook the protection needs of defenders in other hostile environments including in Libya, Algeria, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, which make up 19% of the Foundation's interventions in 2016.

Lastly, the legislative and institutional reform process underway in Tunisia and Morocco call for increased commitment and funding for local associations in order to prevent democratic backsliding. 23% of the Foundation's interventions consequently focused on strengthening the operational capacities of civil society actors, notably those who are acting in remote areas, in these countries.

## 5. Organisational issues

### **5.1. Financial partnerships**

In 2016, the Foundation continued to enjoy the support and core contributions of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), which also contributed with additional funding to respond to several developments during the year, the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Danish Arab Partnership Programme)<sup>15</sup> and the Sigrid Rausing Trust.<sup>16</sup>

It also received specific funding from the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) and the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) towards strengthening support to human rights actors, specifically in Syria, Egypt and Libya and for the protection of defenders through the [European Union Human Rights Defenders' Mechanism](#).

Lastly, the Foundation diversified its support base with four new donors supporting its activities, namely the Rockefeller Brothers Funds and the National Endowment for Democracy in the USA, and the Network for Social Change and the Charities Aid Foundation in the United Kingdom.<sup>17</sup>

### **5.2. Information et communication**

The Foundation continued to apply the principle of confidentiality regarding most of the information linked to its beneficiaries. This policy was adopted and has been implemented in view of the threats faced by the activities and individuals applying for funding, beneficiaries and other defenders in contact with the Foundation. However, the Foundation remains transparent through reporting on its activities and to its main financial partners. Moreover, it developed several secured channels of communications adapted to different regional environments, in order to receive and process funding applications without endangering defenders.

### **5.3. Internal governance**

The Board, composed of 12 members working on a voluntary basis, met twice in 2016, in April and December, to discuss the Foundation's strategy, programmatic and financial directions and consider applications from NGOs in the region. It was also regularly consulted and approved all requests for emergency support during the year.

The Board was assisted by a Secretariat composed of 7 full-time employees and one part-time employee, as well as interns, IT and accounting consultants:

*Programme team :*

- Anne-Sophie Schaeffer (graduate in international public law), full-time employee as Programme Director in France;

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<sup>15</sup> Through EuroMed Rights.

<sup>16</sup> In 2016, core funding from these partners represented 55% of the overall budget of the EMHRF, a percentage which is slightly higher than in 2015.

<sup>17</sup> However, it did not receive support from the Open Society Foundations, in contrast with 2015, but a partnership is under consideration for 2017.

- Frances Topham Smallwood (graduate in international relations and Middle Eastern studies), was promoted to the position as Regional Coordinator for Mashreq in Denmark (with temporary posting in France since September 2016);
- Seif Taha (graduate in political sciences) joined the Foundation's Secretariat as Regional Coordinator for Mashreq to replace Samy Lendvai-Karmout who resigned in October 2015;
- Rami Salhi (graduate in sociology), part-time employee as Regional Consultant for Maghreb in Tunisia;
- Slim Bouzid (graduate in political sciences), full-time employee as Regional Coordinator for Maghreb in Tunisia;
- Tej El Houda Trad (graduate in business and information technologies), part-time employee as Regional Assistant for Maghreb in Tunisia.

*Administrative team :*

- Améline Jaskowiak (graduate in international economics), full-time employee as Administration and Finances Director in Denmark;
- Julia García Han (graduate in economics), full-time employee as Administration and Finances Officer in Denmark.

Maroi Kouka (graduate in human rights and international humanitarian law), then Ayesha Alafifi (graduate in international relations) were recruited as full-time interns in Denmark for periods of at least six months to assist programme and administration staff. An additional intern, Ingrid Hallander (graduate in Middle-Eastern Studies), was recruited to assist with increased activity caused by the situation in the region between June and December 2016.

Following the resignation of the part-time Chief Accountant in March 2016, she was replaced by a consultant in September to assist the administrative and financial team.

Lastly, the EMHRF renewed its partnership with EuroMed Rights that includes, amongst other things, sharing of offices and related costs as well as IT services.<sup>18</sup>

The Foundation's audit was conducted by *Deloitte* in Copenhagen and is available on the Foundation's [website](#).

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<sup>18</sup> This arrangement was put in place so as to minimise both organisation's administrative costs.

**Appendix: Synopsis of Grants Applications**

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

In 2016, the Foundation received and dealt with **616** applications.

<b>Per Status:</b>		
<i>Granted</i>	71*	12%
<i>Rejected</i>	391	63%
<i>Pending</i>	154	25%

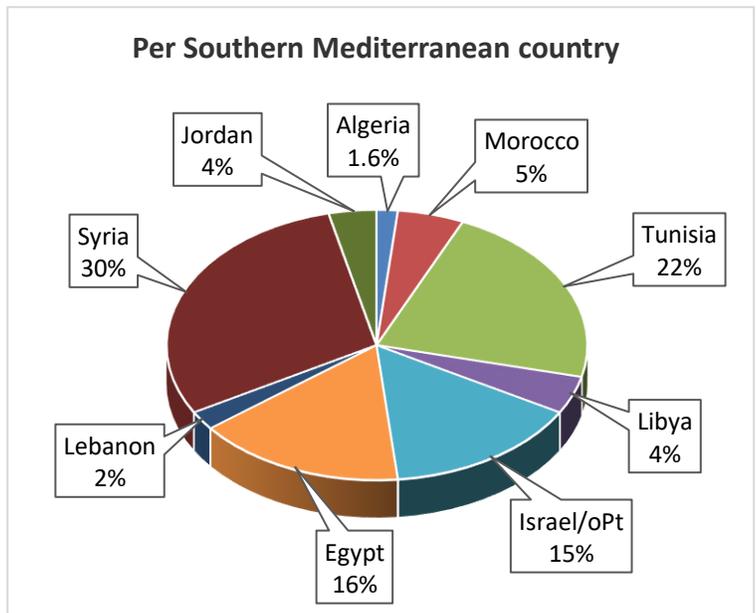
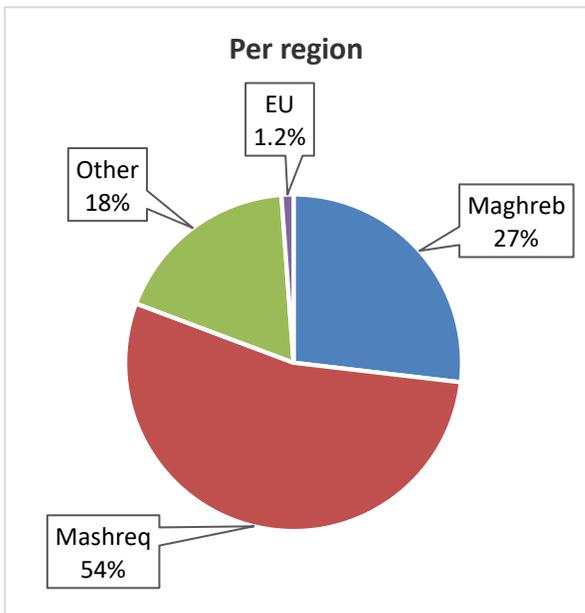
\*This figure does not include the grantees who applied during the last quarter of 2015.

<b>Per Type:</b>		
<i>Urgent</i>	129	21%
<i>Standard</i>	357	58%
<i>Inquiry</i>	130	21%

The total amount granted by the Foundation in 2016 amounts to **€ 1,669,421.00**

**2. Geographic Distribution**

**490** applications came from the Southern Mediterranean region (representing **80%** of all applications received).



### 3. Reasons for Rejection

Four main reasons have justified the ineligibility of the proposals received:

- 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 **35%** 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 **31%** of all proposals rejected.
- The activities suggested are not sufficiently innovative in nature and did not provide a complementary approach with the activities of other civil society initiatives at the local or national level. These applications accounted for **19%** of all proposals rejected.
- The applicant is a well-established NGO that has not experienced any problem in securing funding from mainstream donors. These applications accounted for **15%** 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 advice 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 **30%** 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 average interval between the receipt 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 request</i>	29 days
✓ <i>for inquiry</i>	6 days

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