



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

Activity Report

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1. Introductory Summary

Over the course of 2017, the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders (EMHRF) carried out 136 interventions totalling 1,7 million Euros to strengthen the protection, resilience and innovation capacity of human rights defenders and civil society actors in the Arab region.

The Foundation's interventions included a **32% increase over 2016 in urgent protection and bridge funding interventions**, largely attributable to large scale population movements and forced displacement in Syria.

Nearly three quarters of **the Foundation's interventions were carried out in countries in situations of armed conflict or hostile environments** (Syria, Libya, Egypt, Algeria, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories) and were aimed at protecting human rights defenders from danger and supporting their resilience.

The results of these interventions are encouraging, as illustrated in the following examples.

*The Foundation made urgent grants aimed at protecting the lives of seventeen defenders forcibly displaced from besieged areas in **Syria**. These defenders had already been at risk because of their human rights work before their displacement, and were threatened again in their new locations because of their profile and activities in defence of fundamental rights and freedoms. The Foundation helped them to relocate abroad, where they have been able to access health care and cover their most basic needs while testifying about their experience. A book *Les Passeurs de livres de Daraya* was published by a French award-winning journalist in autumn 2017, focusing on the civil activism in Darayya during the siege with significant contribution from the Foundation's beneficiaries from the city.*

*A newly established initiative was launched to promote respect for the rights of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer community in **Egypt**. Given the significant legal, security, psychological and societal challenges that the community is presently facing, such support will serve to create safe spaces and provide psychological support, legal aid and representation services, as well as building capacities of those facing discrimination and mounting criminalisation because of their sexual orientation.*

*A unique human rights film festival brought together a hundred participants in December 2017 in Tripoli, **Libya**, to promote peaceful coexistence, dialogue and cohesion. Widely covered in the local media, the organisers screened some 70 films and documentaries from over 15 countries, including 21 Libyan films, dealing with issues of displacement and migration, armed conflicts in the region, and the status and lives of women and children. These films encouraged critical thinking, debate and civic engagement, and opened a dialogue about human rights issues among the general public.*

Nearly a quarter of **the Foundation's interventions were aimed at strengthening the core operations of innovative and emerging civil society initiatives working primarily in remote regions of Morocco and Tunisia** to address inequalities and deficiencies in human rights protection and to empower disadvantaged populations, notably youth and women, to be actors of sustainable democratic and human rights change.

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

*Thanks to civil society consultations organised by a new association in Midelt, **Eastern Morocco**, recommendations to draft a law guaranteeing the linguistic and cultural rights of the Amazigh population in the education system and curricula, and the sustainable development of the Drâa-Tafilalet region were presented to the Parliamentary Commission of Justice, Legislation and Human Rights, the Parliamentary Commission on Infrastructure, Energy, Mines and Environment, to the Ministries of Education and Agriculture, and to the National Human Rights Council.*

*Seed funding provided by the Foundation allowed for a unique cultural space led by and for youth to be renovated and opened in Redeyef, one of the most marginalised city in **Southern Tunisia**. This space organises regular drawing, theatrical and music workshops and festivals to cultivate the potential and empower hundreds of children and youths on citizenship rights and duties. It hosted the first Documentary Film Festival of Redeyef on 20-24 December.*

*A Lesbian, Bisexual and Transsexual rights association, registered in May 2016 in **Tunisia**, rented offices and employed a coordinator to organise an intersectional feminist space by and for women, questioning gender roles and challenging the hold of patriarchy at the Tunis International Feminist Art Festival 'Chouftouhonna' in September. The festival is the first of its kind in the region, bringing together more than 250 women and women-identifying artists from more than 50 different countries to rethink feminism and feminist issues through multiple angles. Based on the success of the event, the association is preparing local campaigns to transfer and enrich the experience from the festival and raise awareness about critical issues facing women in **six remote governorates** (Gafsa, Kairouan, Sfax, Sousse, Bizerte and El Kef).*

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 that civil society actors might sustain their activities. Operating costs made up 68% of all costs covered by the Foundation in 2017.¹ The Foundation also strengthened its support to **youth and women**, who made up 40% and 32% respectively of its beneficiaries.²

Beyond this direct support, the Foundation also helped its partners contact other donors, with **42% of them securing additional funding as a result**. Lastly, it continued to reinforce 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 synergies and cross-borders learnings and to expand support opportunities. Beyond its commitments towards the [European Union Human Rights Defenders' Mechanism](#), the Foundation continued to lead coordination efforts among donors and foundations to **address the closing space for civil society**, and it decided to further study **means to mobilise and expand national resources for the local human rights movements**, as a new and key strategic direction for its work aimed at strengthening their resilience and prospects for sustainability.

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 detail below.

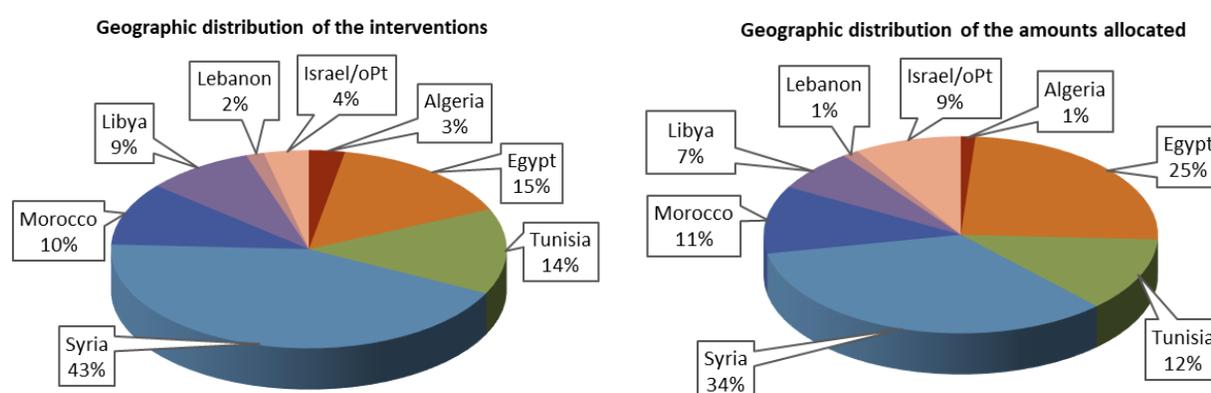
¹ The protection needs of defenders in the region, including health care, basic resources for families and urgent/temporary relocation, represented 25% of the costs covered. The remaining 7% supported projects, notably timely or innovative ones, that didn't require support for operating costs.

² These beneficiaries comprise female and young defenders (below the age of 35) as well as civil society actors led by and working toward youth and women in particular.

2. Direct Interventions

Overall, the Foundation recorded a 5% increase in its grant-making activity,³ with a notable rise of urgent protection requests and grants. It carried out 136 interventions to support 144 defenders (74 civil society initiatives and 70 individual defenders) working to promote respect for human rights in the Southern Mediterranean region.⁴ 51% of the Foundation's direct interventions were made in an emergency context to protect the lives and well-being of defenders, while 49% were aimed at strengthening the functioning of groups or associations that do not have access to traditional sources of funding.⁵

As illustrated by the breakdown of grants by country provided below, Syria and Egypt represent a significant share of the Foundation's interventions due to the harsh conditions for exercising human rights work:



Support is distributed in two main categories: urgent interventions to protect individual defenders, and flexible interventions to support innovative or emerging initiatives in the regional context.⁶

2.1. Urgent Interventions to Protect Individual Defenders

In 2017, the Foundation granted urgent support to protect the safety of 70 individual defenders (33% of them women and LGBTQ defenders) and their families, who were at risk because of their work in Syria, Libya, Egypt, Algeria and Tunisia.

³ This increase is reflected both in the number and in the amount of grants allocated. To note, the EMHRF received and assessed 711 requests in 2017, which represents an increase of 15% compared to 2016.

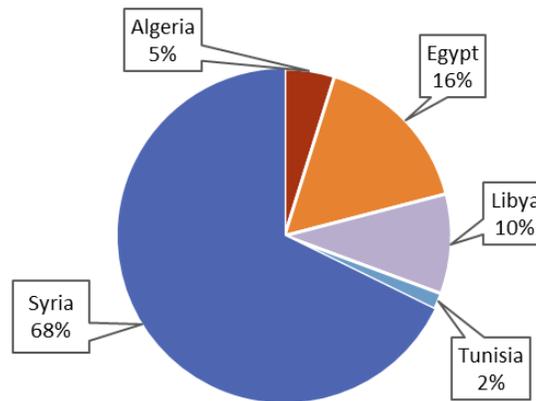
⁴ Based on thorough due diligence reviews performed by the Secretariat according to selection criteria, the Board decided to allocate direct support to 19% of the requests received. 5% of the Foundation's beneficiaries are members of EuroMed Rights.

⁵ Activities in support of defenders represented 78% of the Foundation's budget while administrative costs and wages were capped at 22%.

⁶ 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.

As shown in the pie chart below, the vast majority of the Foundation's urgent grants was awarded to Syrian defenders that experienced significant violence and forced displacement as well as arbitrary and variant measures of harassment, deprivation of freedom, torture and ill-treatment.

Distribution of grants to individual HRDs per country



In particular, 60% of the grants were provided to cover the **immediate and temporary relocation of defenders abroad**,⁷ 21% covered **medical costs and psychosocial support** and 19% covered **legal aid and/or basic needs** of defenders' families. These grants were mainly allocated in response to threats and in view of their precarious situations, and they aimed at allowing these defenders and their families to regain a sense of normalcy in their lives and consider means to pursue their activism in the future.

Furthermore, the Foundation followed up closely on the situation of 62% of these defenders with a view to securing additional forms of support (that is, other than financial). In particular, it coordinated its urgent interventions in support of 24 recipients with partners implementing solidarity actions (urgent appeals, letters to support asylum and resettlement requests, trial observation missions, meetings with officials, etc.); it assisted 15 defenders in accessing rehabilitation services, training or scholarship opportunities abroad, and secured longer term financial support for five relocated defenders, notably from the EU HRDs Mechanism *ProtectDefenders.eu*.

Overall, the **results of these protection grants** are encouraging:

- In 74% of the cases, the grants and the follow-up undertaken likely saved their lives and helped secure their long-term protection. For example, a peaceful pro-democracy defender, whose apartment was stormed by the Egyptian authorities early 2017, avoided arbitrary arrest and a lengthy prison sentence on politically motivated and terrorist charges. Thanks to his urgent relocation abroad and further assistance to access legal assistance upon arrival, the defender was recognised as a refugee and granted international protection in Europe in December. At the time of writing, 13 Syrian, Libyan and Egyptian defenders supported had been granted asylum or obtained work permits in Europe and the United States of America.

⁷ The EMHRF is vigilant about the potential draining effect that the resettlement of defenders in other countries could cause.

- In several cases, the support allocated also helped to build the defenders' linguistic and operational skills and employability prospects, notably when relocated abroad. For example, a defender threatened by extremist armed groups in northern Syria regularised his legal situation in Turkey, which allowed him to concentrate on developing his long-term prospects. Thanks to reference and support from the Foundation, among others, the activist applied and was selected to take part in a prestigious international scholarship aimed at developing global leaders. He is now enrolled in a Masters' degree in NGO management. At the time of writing, 37% of the defenders supported have secured a stable source of income.
- Last but not least, the grants were instrumental for 80% of them to resume their work in defence of human rights whether in their countries or abroad. For example, a Syrian female defender, who was detained by Syrian military intelligence on charges of financing terrorism, due to her relief and artistic work in support of political detainees, and released after spending four months in Adra women's prison, has been able to travel to and meet her basic needs in Lebanon, and avoided serious risk of re-arrest in Syria. She is currently preparing an exhibition featuring her artistic works, with a focus on female detainees in Syrian prisons, and continues to collaborate with Syrian and Lebanese human rights organisations.

However, 18 defenders were unable to reach safety abroad, or to return to their home country due to the persistence of threats, and the whereabouts of one abducted activist in northern Syria remain unknown at the time of writing. In light of the travel bans and mass arrests of dissidents in Egypt, the policy of displacement carried out in Syria, and the *de facto* or partial closure of its neighbours' borders, the Foundation expects that their situation will remain precarious. It may thus consider bringing other forms of support to them and their families in the future.

2.2. Interventions in Support of Innovative or Emerging Human Rights Initiatives

With a view to adapting interventions to different national dynamics, the Foundation provided flexible support, *both on an urgent and regular basis*,⁸ to 74 civil society initiatives, including unregistered groups, that faced difficulties in securing funding or whose activity felt outside mainstream donors' priorities.

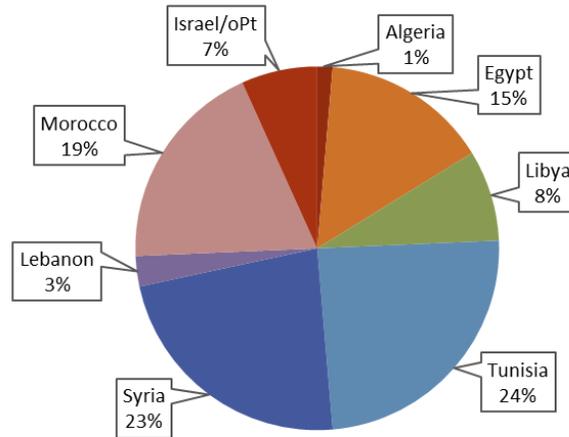
These grants were mainly awarded to innovative initiatives that have recently been established, to support the start of activities, and to well-established and reputable organisations that faced sudden financial shortfalls, in order to fill unexpected funding gaps.⁹

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

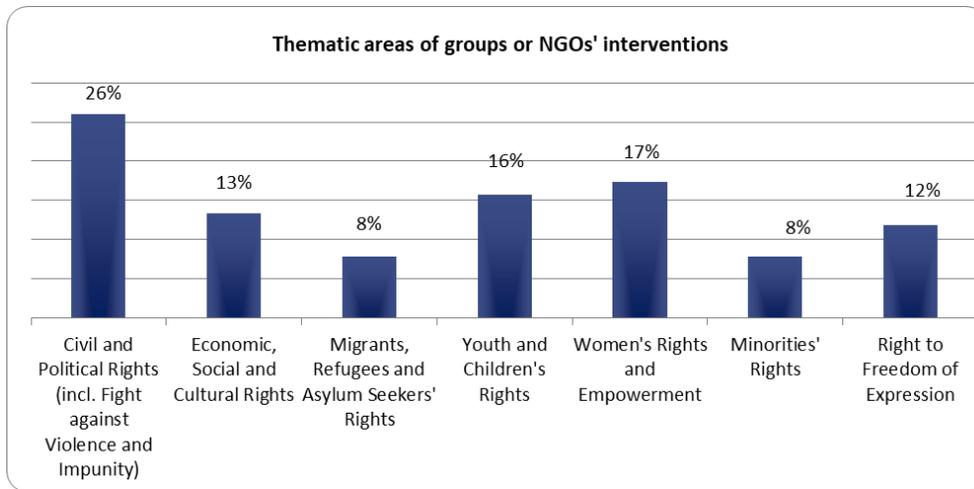
⁸ 8 of the 74 civil society groups and NGOs received urgent bridge grants to cover unexpected financial shortfalls in 2017.

⁹ Well-established associations facing difficulties made up 26% of the recipients of the Foundation's flexible support interventions, and 74% were new civil society initiatives.

Distribution of grants to groups or associations per country



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



In particular, the Foundation sought to respond to specific needs expressed by civil society actors in the five contexts and areas outlined below.¹⁰

2.2.1. Sustaining Human Rights Initiatives in Support of Victims in Syria

The Foundation supported 17 Syrian human rights groups that aim at **providing assistance and empowering victims of violations, in particular former detainees, women, young people, children, and handicapped persons, to call for justice and accountability in the country and from abroad.** The specific focus of the grants was:

¹⁰ This report does not provide details about interventions in Lebanon and Algeria because of their very small number. Furthermore, no grant was allocated to Jordanian civil society initiatives, mainly due to other sources of funding available in the country.

- To strengthen specialist or local initiatives that aim at documenting violations by all parties to the conflict and against all segments of the population, with a focus on detention and enforced disappearances;
- To support autonomous victim-led efforts to pursuing justice and redress as well as accessing rehabilitation;
- To nurture grassroots dialogue and educational initiatives aimed at reducing the severity of violence and breaking its cycle, notably toward the youths, and to prepare for the process of post-conflict peace-building;
- To provide legal, administrative and psychosocial assistance to vulnerable displaced and refugee populations, while empowering them to develop knowledge about fundamental rights.

2.2.2. Supporting Emerging Human Rights Initiatives in Libya

The Foundation's interventions aimed at supporting 6 Libyan human rights organisations to ***develop and maintain their activities aimed at defending and promoting respect for fundamental rights, and to report on violations of these rights***. In particular, the initiatives supported pursued the following objectives:

- To document threats facing Libyan defenders and journalists, including cases of enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, attacks and ill-treatment, and to refer those in danger to initiatives providing financial, legal and psychosocial support;
- To produce analytical reports and advocate to change the reality facing women and migrants detained in the northwest and northeast of Libya;
- To promote peaceful coexistence and civic engagement as well as respect for human rights among the general public through film narratives.

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

The Foundation continued to focus its interventions on ***upholding the resilience of the independent civil society movement in Egypt*** by helping human rights defenders and their organisations to ***implement contingency strategies in the country and from abroad enabling them to continue documenting violations, assisting victims of the repression and advocating for respect of fundamental rights***. The Foundation notably supported 11 initiatives seeking:

- To document violent incidents, human rights violations and arbitrary legal practices and frameworks;
- To provide support and legal aid to victims of violations and discriminations, among whom human rights and LGBTQ defenders, political activists, journalists, peaceful demonstrators and university students as well as vulnerable women;
- To enlarge the base of support for the independent civil society movement locally, notably by reporting on events in a way that counters the state media's control of information;
- To raise concerns about Egypt's human rights records internationally, and campaign for accountability.

2.2.4. Protecting Civil Society Action and Innovation in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

The Foundation focused its interventions on providing ***bridge funding to human rights organisations facing unforeseen crisis or seed funding to innovative initiatives that strive to document, prevent and respond to***

violations and discriminations in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. The mission of the 5 supported NGOs was the following:

- To archive materials to be used as a tool for human rights change and justice, and to preserve common memories;
- To enhance respect for human rights and equality through media advocacy for marginalised groups, particularly youth and women, in Gaza;
- To provide psychological and legal support to victims of sexual and gender-based violence, and expose through awareness campaigns the phenomenon and practices against Arab women in Israel;
- To provide legal aid to refugees and asylum seekers, and advocate for the development of a fair asylum system in Israel.

2.2.5. Strengthening Associations in Remote Regions of 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 32 **local associations to address inequalities and deficiencies in human rights protection, and empower disadvantaged populations, notably youth and women, to be actors of sustainable democratic and human rights change**. In particular, the Foundation supported 18 Tunisian and 14 Moroccan initiatives that pursued the following specific objectives:

- To address grievances facing vulnerable populations, notably young people and women, through documentation and the provision of psychosocial and legal support as well as rehabilitation;
- To educate, including through cultural, artistic and media activities, children, youth and women on citizenship rights and duties, and to empower them to play a greater role in matters relating to the local development, social cohesion and governance in their rural regions;
- To relay the expectations of disadvantaged populations, and recommend reforms to laws and practices through targeted advocacy initiatives towards the local and central authorities.

2.2.6. Follow-up and outcomes of interventions in support of innovative or sensitive initiatives

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

- Encouraged and helped 55 newly formed groups, representing 74% of the NGO beneficiaries, to draft action plans and proposals to enable the Foundation, in conjunction with other partners, to strategically respond to their needs;
- Coached 15 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 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 two consultations aimed at strengthening convergence between the programmes offered by technical and financial partners in Tunisia;¹¹
- Met with representatives of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM), established in December 2016, to strengthen coordination and partnership with Syrian human rights organisations documenting violations for future investigation and prosecution of those responsible for the most serious crimes in Syria;¹²
- 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;
- Provided external mentoring to assess the management and governance as well as mandate, performances and orientations of an association with a view to assist in its strategic development and its approach toward donors in the future;
- Co-organised 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 47% of its beneficiaries, e.g. 35 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.

Some of the main impacts of the Foundation's partners in 2017 are highlighted below:

- ***Documented reports and cases of grave violations were communicated to UN mechanisms and used to uncover the truth and seek justice for the victims in Syria, Egypt, Libya, Israel and Algeria.***
 - This includes, for example, 136 cases of enforced disappearances in Syria, among which 28 were communicated to the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances. A 35-page report was produced on the Al-Joura and Al-Qusour massacres that took place in Deir el-Zor governorate in 2012, including analysis of dozens of videos and photos of the events to identify possible mass graves. The quality of the documentation produced by these Syrian NGOs, among others, led to several inquiries from organisations working on universal jurisdiction cases in Europe, to the launch of a joint media campaign to expose stories of detainees and the location of detention centers, and to the [signing of a protocol of cooperation](#) with the International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011.
 - In Egypt, hundreds of judicial proceedings of a political nature (prosecutions' interrogations and trial sessions) were digitized; protest actions, incidents of violence inside Egypt's pre-university education institutions were documented in addition to analysing the various legal frameworks adopted by the executive and legislative branches

¹¹ These consultations included the EMHRF, the French Institute in Tunisia, EuroMed Rights, the Foundation of France, the Italian Embassy, the UNDP, the PASC (Civil Society Support Programme) financed by the EU, the European Endowment for Democracy, the German Embassy, the Danish Embassy, the Foundation Education and Employment, CAWTAR, GVC, UICN-Med, FIDH, COSPE, Mercy Corps, the World Bank, the EU Delegation, The PCPA Programme Being Active, and Jamaity.

¹² 15 Syrian human rights organisations, supported by the Foundation in the past, were invited to discuss means of future cooperation with the IIIM.

to subjugate human rights defenders and to control both print, TV and electronic media. For example, a documentary to be produced by an NGO beneficiary will shed light on arbitrary procedures adopted by the authorities to supervise released prisoners of conscience.

- A database was built to document violations perpetrated against defenders and journalists in Libya, and three NGOs produced 15 fact-finding reports assessing the situation of 2,292 migrants, including 271 women and 179 children, in detention centers in Tripoli, Sabratha, Zawiya, Zliten, Khomes and Misrata, northwest of Libya. Besides submitting these reports to the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of Migrants, these NGOs held dialogue sessions on refugees' rights with the centers' managers and agents, the Ministry of Health and hospitals to obtain their release, prevent further abuses and provide them with necessary health care.
- ***Legal assistance, psychosocial support and rehabilitation services were provided to more than 7,000 victims of violations, notably peaceful demonstrators, human rights and pro-democracy activists, stateless, displaced and refugee populations from Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia and Morocco.***
 - For example, daily legal and administrative guidance, including on personal status laws, polygamy, early marriage, domestic violence, child soldiers' recruitment, and citizenship, as well as educational and psychosocial support sessions were provided to 6,991 Syrian internally displaced and refugee women and children in Idlib countryside, Syria and in Antakya, Southern Turkey.
 - In Egypt, legal assistance and representation services were provided to 144 victims of violations in four governorates (Daqahliya, Gharbiya, Cairo and Qena). For example, a unique mobile clinic was launched to provide weekly pro bono legal advice to rural women on a range of issues, including child custody, denying employment due to religious bias and disability, sexual harassment, disputes over paternity proof, and inheritance. Thanks to legal aid and representation services, dozens of human rights and political activists, who were arrested for peacefully protesting, were also released while many others remain in custody.
 - 70 labour rights' advices were provided to Syrian workers in the occupied Golan Heights, in addition to approximately 60 counselling sessions in the fields of education, identity, construction, and registering children in the census record. In three cases, a court decision was made in favour of workers whose rights were violated by the state of Israel.
 - 22 stateless families living in remote and undeveloped regions in Lebanon were supported to obtain birth registrations, while six nationality Court cases were lodged. Besides legal counselling, a unique dialogue was engaged by this association with five ministries in addition to the UNHCR, UNICEF and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on issues related to statelessness (including civil registration, access to justice, education, health and social services) to jointly debate on measures that need to be adopted to end this phenomenon.
 - Psychosocial support and legal guidance as well as rehabilitation services were provided to 315 victims of discrimination, violence and torture in Tunisia and Morocco. For example, a Tunisian association opened a shelter and provided psychosocial counselling to seven women victims of violence, notably single mothers, in the northwest of Tunisia. Two Moroccan associations supported and represented at court peaceful demonstrators and activists tried due to their participation in the social protest movements in Al-Hoceima, Bouizakarne and Tamanarte, northern and southern

Morocco. As a result, many of them were freed in 2017-2018 while appeals have been lodged and investigations continue for others.

- **169 educational events, often making use of film narratives and the arts, were held to create debate on civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, women and children rights, and to empower 4,619 marginalised persons, notably children, youth and women, to play a greater role in matters relating to sustainable development, social cohesion and governance in remote regions of Tunisia, Morocco, the occupied Palestinian territories, Libya, Syria and Egypt.**
 - For example, four human rights and documentary films' festivals were organised to encourage critical thinking, debate and civic engagement, and to open a dialogue about human rights issues with the public in Gaza (Palestine), Tripoli (Libya), Redeyef (Tunisia) and Guelmim (Morocco).
 - A new platform was established in Tunisia to enable young citizens to report on problems encountered and participate in the decision-making process related to their environment with eight municipalities. A unique cultural and design space was also opened for youth in the Al Hafsia district, a popular area in the Medina of Tunis, and cultural and artistic workshops led to the birth of a series of micro projects developed by young people to promote permaculture and improve the urban agriculture. Agreements were also signed between an NGO beneficiary and 14 young beneficiaries of educational workshops on human rights to establish the first youth-led civic publication "Zamamag" in the governorate of Siliiana in 2018.
 - A first regional forum gathering human rights associations was held to discuss problems experienced in the Souss-Massa region, Morocco, with the local authorities. Such dialogue and coordination initiative, among others, led to the formation of five specific units to document and report on human rights issues in various cities of the Souss-Massa, Drâa-Tafilalet, Fès-Meknès and Oriental regions, Morocco.
 - Human rights and citizenship clubs were established in primary and secondary schools in Manouba, Gafsa, Monastir and el Kef, Tunisia; and 29 youth centres will continue functioning and raise awareness about citizenship and democracy among the disadvantaged young people throughout Tunisia and Morocco.
 - Capacity building sessions on peacebuilding, organisational development, international human rights law and transitional justice and coordination meetings with ten civil society organisations in the north-west and north-east of Syria led to the birth of a local campaign denouncing violence against children in the Idlib governorate. In addition, radio programs discussing the prevalence of children and gender-based violence in various social institutions served to launch a social media campaign to address the phenomenon of women violence and child labour in the Gaza strip. As a result, several Palestinian municipalities adopted the campaign on their social media accounts, and expanded its scope to include other contentious issues such as child marriage, school dropouts, child abuse, among other issues.
- **Various advocacy arguments and recommendations were moved forward by the civil society beneficiaries to call for accountability and harmonise the legislations and practices with the constitutional provisions and the international conventions ratified by Tunisia, Morocco, Israel, Libya and Egypt.**
 - Based on sustained work with women victims of violence and an advocacy campaign launched by one NGO beneficiary together with a national alliance against violence, a unique [law for the elimination of violence against women](#) was adopted by the Assembly

- of the Representatives of the People in Tunisia on 24 July 2017.
- A draft bill on the protection and social reintegration of former female detainees was also drafted by a Libyan association and presented to the Women and Children's Committee within the House of Representatives in February 2018. The draft bill should be assigned to the Committee for study in the months to come.
 - A petition was filed to the Supreme Court in Israel, challenging the constitutionality of the "Deposit Law" that entered into force in May 2017 and intensified the existing harsh policies toward 40,000 Eritrean and Sudanese asylum seekers. Such law notably allows Israeli authorities to deduct 20% of the monthly salary of asylum seekers who entered the country illegally and would only be returned once they leave Israel.
 - Over two hundred land registration and Israeli government policy records were archived to provide human rights associations with advocacy and litigation tools to resist the government's plan to evict villagers in the occupied Palestinian territories.
 - Advocacy meetings were held with European Members' States to raise concerns about Egypt's human rights records, and to stop exporting lethal weaponry to Egypt's Interior Ministry, largely believed to be used to quell peaceful protests.
 - A practical guide aimed at strengthening the protection of Moroccan human rights defenders was discussed among local civil society actors, and will be presented to national institutions, political parties, the Ministry of Justice, and Members of the Parliament in 2018.
 - Three Libyan NGO beneficiaries participated in advocacy meetings surrounding the 36th session of the UN Human Rights Council in September during which they presented an overview on the human rights situation and met with several state representatives to discuss technical assistance and capacity-building to improve human rights, notably the rights of migrants and IDPs, in Libya. As a result, the UN Special Rapporteur on IDPs conducted a country visit early 2018 to Libya, and a joint meeting should be organised with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), the UN Special Procedures, and Libyan civil society organisations in April 2018.

Last but not least, ***cross-borders exchanges took place between grassroots women rights' organisations from Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria to learn lessons from their respective experiences; most Tunisian and Moroccan civil society stakeholders developed partnerships with the local and central authorities***, such as the ministries of Human Rights, Culture, Education, Youth and Sports, Agriculture and the Environment, and the national institutions – notably the National Human Rights Council and its regional commissions in Morocco. Lastly ***42% of them secured additional funding*** to ensure -at least in part- the sustainability of their activity.

However, these above-mentioned results should not conceal the ***significant threats, managerial and financial difficulties facing the civil societies within the region***.

Beyond the rise of urgent interventions that have been made to protect the safety of activists, the arrest of the representative of an NGO beneficiary in Egypt, the liquidity crisis in Libya, the temporary freeze of assets of two NGOs in Tunisia in an overall climate of increasing controls placed on the NGO sector in the Middle East and North Africa region, and the poor reporting capabilities of one NGO, have led to the adoption of additional monitoring and follow-up measures and arrangements by the Foundation.

3. Indirect Interventions

Beyond direct financial interventions, the Foundation strengthened its presence or contacts with civil society actors to closely monitor local dynamics, and it organised meetings or commissioned studies to sustain financing for human rights activism in the region.

3.1. 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 **four field visits in the governorates of Siliana, El Kef, Jendouba, Medenine, Gabes, Tataouine, Tozeur, Kebili and Gafsa** to carry out prospective work, review problems met and needs of emerging associations in the fields of development and assistance in the course of 2017. Thanks to these visits, 9 emerging associations were granted seed support and received direct tailored coaching and advice on project planning and implementation. In addition, the EMHRF provided daily advices to these groups and other beneficiaries on exploring synergies and developing technical and financial partnerships with other national institutions, civil society stakeholders,¹³ and donors. This proved to be valuable as 21% of the beneficiaries developed partnerships with Ministries, and 33% of them have secured complementary means of funding to ensure - at least in part - the sustainability of their activity.

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 Northern Algeria**, during which the Foundation met with representatives of 12 associations, to remain attuned to civil society dynamics and the difficulties they face in a context that is marked by both a legislative framework that is not conducive to the emergence of strong associations and by a political status quo.

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 Lebanon** in February to meet with 25 Lebanese, Syrian and international NGOs and UN agencies, as well as researchers and individual activists in order to assess the dynamics of Lebanese and Syrian organisations in Lebanon, and to provide insights into civil society work taking

¹³ For example, five Tunisian NGO beneficiaries participated in the Civil Society Symposium organised by EuroMed Rights in Monastir on 15-17 December 2017. Beyond providing a unique opportunity for these newly established organisations to establish connections with other local grassroots' organisations, this event aimed at exchanging and deciding on the contextual priorities in the country as well as on common actions to be undertaken by 130 representatives of civil society organisations to address them.

place in government-controlled areas of Syria and civil society positions on the Geneva negotiations. Thanks to this visit, several issue areas were identified as gaps in need of additional attention, including access to support for Syrian defenders and associations in Lebanon, protection of Syrian refugees, and coordination and cooperation between Syrian civil society based in Turkey and Lebanon.

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

3.2. Strengthening Financial Support for Local Civil Society Actors

The Foundation also played an active role in meetings with donors with a view to securing long-term financial support for defenders in the region. It notably led coordination efforts among donors and foundations to address the closing space for civil society, and studied means to mobilise and expand national resources for the local human rights movements in Tunisia, in order to uphold their resilience and prospects for sustainability.

3.2.1. Circumventing the Closing Space for Civil Society

To complement regular exchanges with local and international NGOs, the Foundation organised a consultative meeting with 29 representatives of the main bilateral, multilateral and private donors involved in supporting the civil society in June. This consultation aimed at sharing knowledge on the strategies adopted by the NGOs and the funders to circumvent the closing space, and considering means and mechanisms to sustain funding for the human rights movement presently and in the future.¹⁴

Thanks to the meeting, donors have agreed to form three specific working groups to build on the conclusions from the meeting and to continue discussing 1) practical issues, 2) advocacy that funders could undertake, and supporting 3) stress management for activists at risk.

3.2.2. Strengthening Local Funding for Civic Engagement and Human Rights

As a new and strategic direction to its work, the Foundation commissioned a study to identify pathways to strengthen national funding opportunities for Tunisian civil society actors, in conjunction with similar efforts underway in Morocco. It formed a steering group composed of six personalities recognised for their expertise in the field and in terms of associative dynamics in Tunisia, to enrich the methodology of the study and test possible hypotheses.

The steering committee met to discuss the methodology and its preliminary results, which were further discussed with the Human Rights Funders' Network (HRFN)¹⁵ at its annual meeting in New York in July. It was also enriched by Tunisian civil society representatives on the occasion of Tunisia Civil Society Platform on 15-17 December 2017. The study will be finalised in mid-2018.

¹⁴ Undertaken by the Foundation, a draft survey on civil society challenges and approaches to the closing space served as a background note.

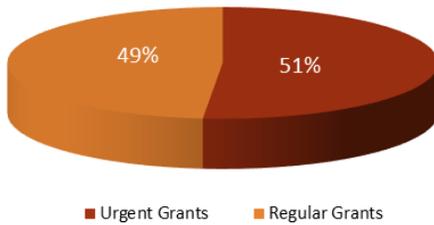
¹⁵ [HRFG](#) is a network of international foundations that currently gathers more than 330 funding bodies and 1,200 philanthropists that support human rights globally. The Foundation is a member of HRFG since 2010 and a founding member of its Working Group on human rights defenders, established in 2011.

4. Quantified Review of Interventions

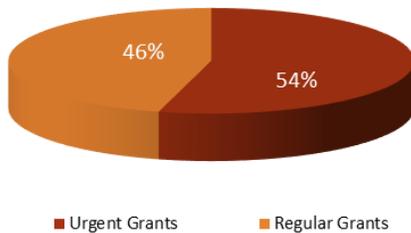
The following pie charts and graphs provide a quantified summary of the grants allocated by the Foundation to defenders and NGOs in 2017.

4.1. Type of Interventions

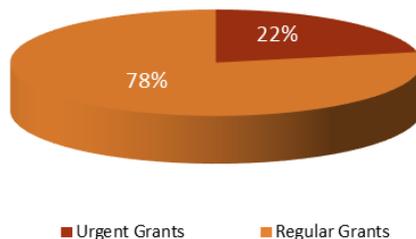
Type of interventions (# grants)



Type of interventions (# beneficiaries)



Type of interventions (amounts)

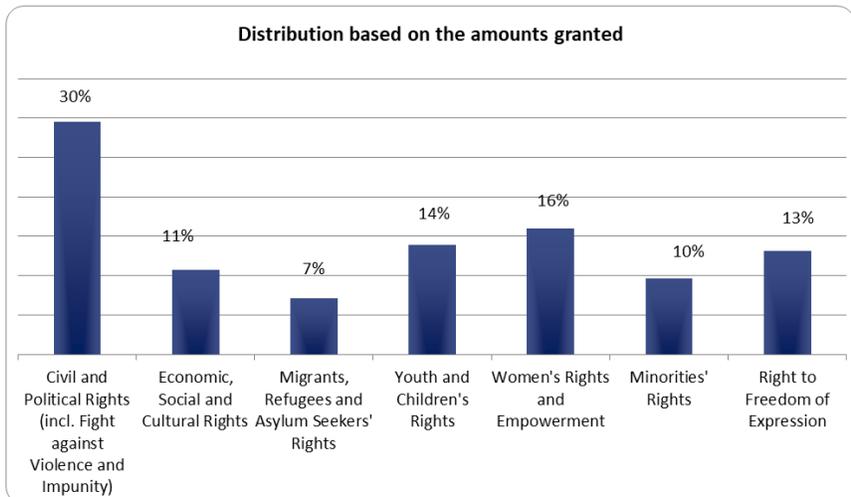
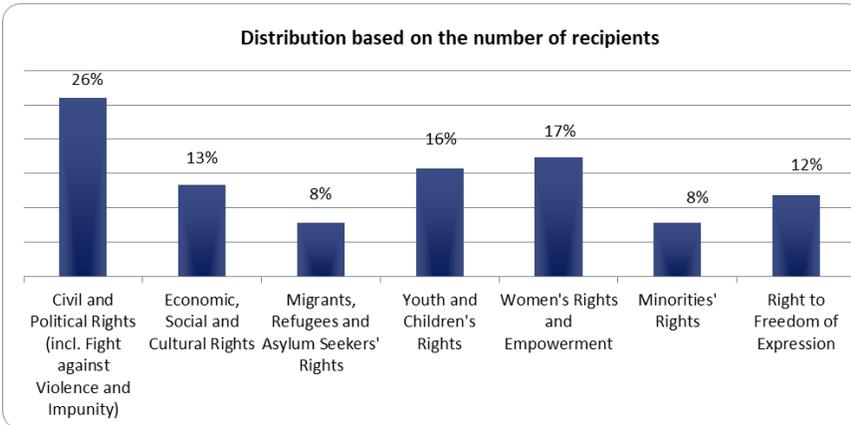
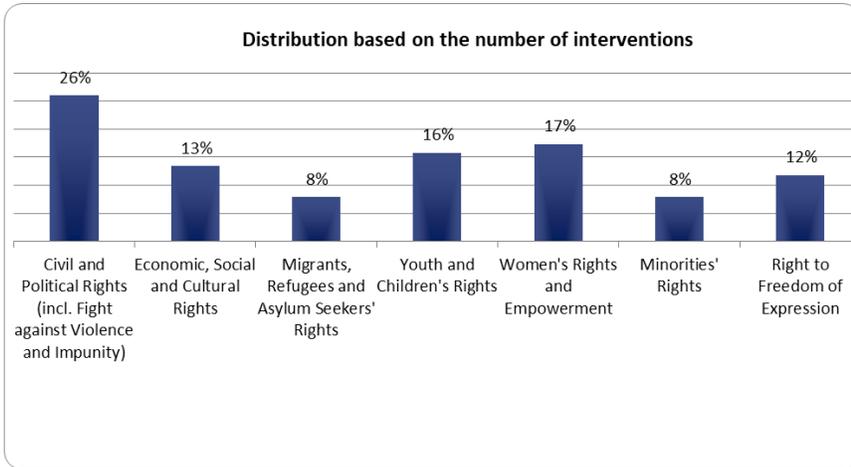


Although they represent much lower sums of money than regular grants, the Foundation's urgent interventions increased by 32% from 2016. They aimed at protecting the lives and security of defenders working in hostile environments, in particular Syria.

51% of the Foundation's grants were provided in an emergency situation, whereas 49% were allocated in the framework of biannual calls for proposals and meetings of the Board. Through these two support mechanisms, available [online](#), the Foundation is able to address in a flexible way both life-threatening situations and innovation.

The average amount of the grants allocated is €12,208, slightly higher than in 2016. This figure not only emphasises the significance of the grant rather than its value but also the limited budgetary means for the region's civil societies.

4.2. Thematic Areas

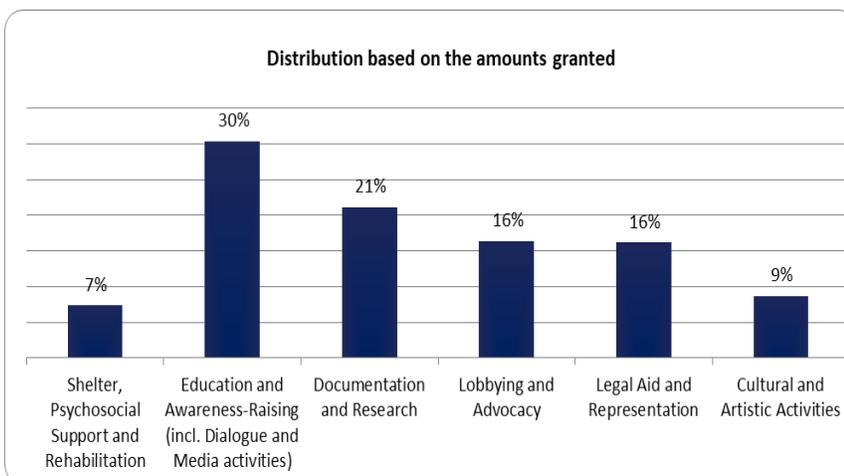
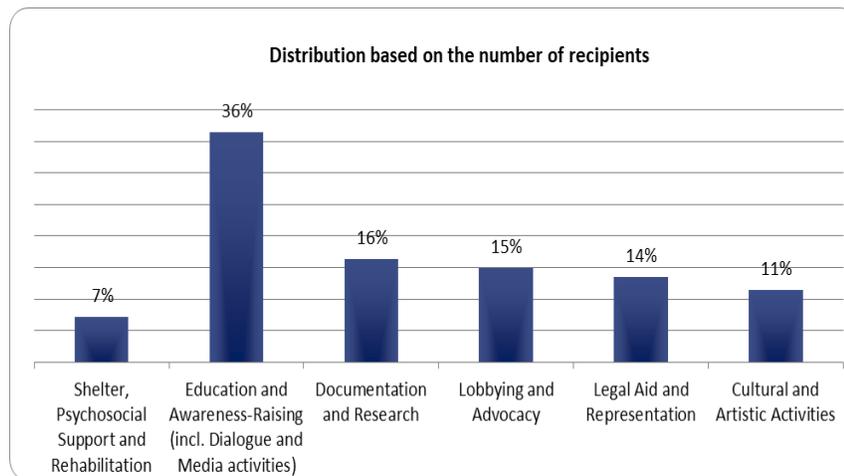
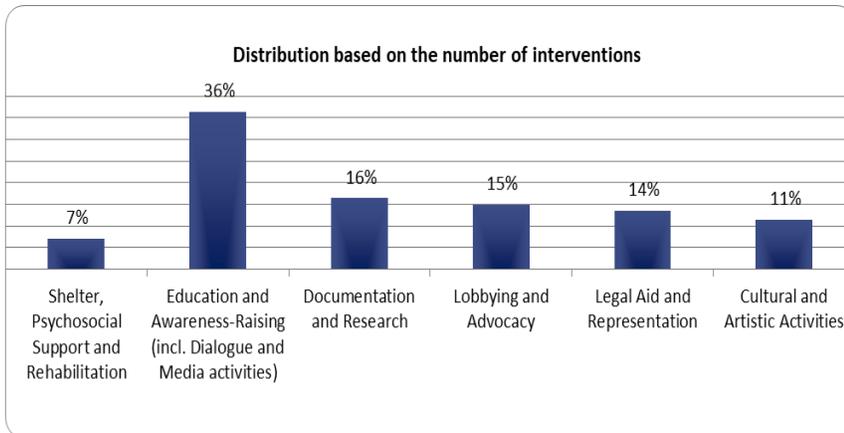


The main focus of the Foundation's beneficiaries remains the fight against impunity and the promotion of reforms in the fields of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, which are both interdependent and priority issues for the fulfilment of human rights in the region. As a result, 39% of interventions were related to these issues.

Furthermore, in view of the central role of women and youth in societies and in establishing effective and sustainable foundations for democracy, the Foundation made it a priority to strengthen youth and women's rights, their participation and leadership, which represented 33% of its interventions in 2017.

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 thematic areas covered by the NGOs' beneficiaries.

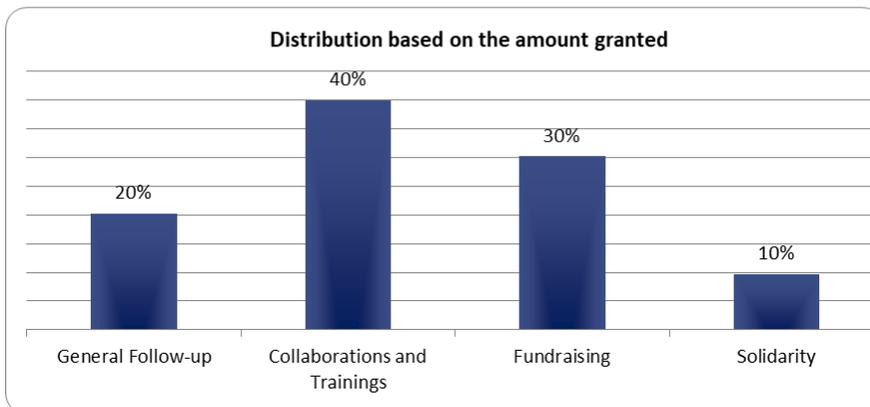
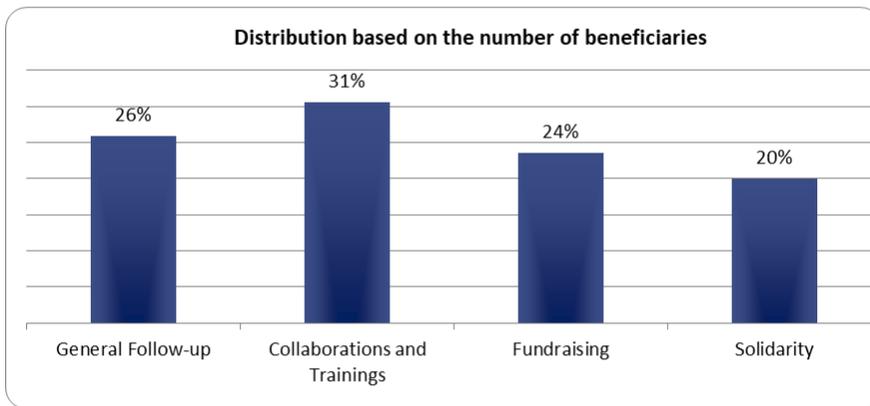
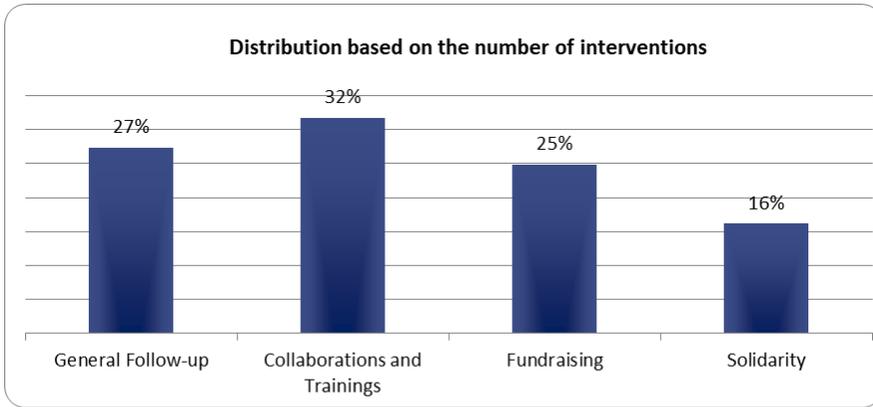
4.3. Activities



Complementary activities in the field of education, dialogue and advocacy, that are key to giving impetus to human rights reforms and transformation, represent the most significant share of activities (51%) implemented by the Foundation's recipients. These are also encouraged by cultural and artistic activities, as alternatives to conventional tools, to reach a broader and younger audience. Festival, street theatre, music and popular arts are examples of innovative ways adopted by 11% of the beneficiaries to disseminate the values of democracy, citizenship, justice and respect for human rights.

In a region with different national dynamics, a significant part of the activities carried out by the Foundation's partners also aimed at documenting violations, providing assistance, and pursuing justice and redress for the victims. These activities, which are taking place in particularly hostile environments, made up 37% of all activities carried out by the Foundation's partners.

4.4. Follow-Up



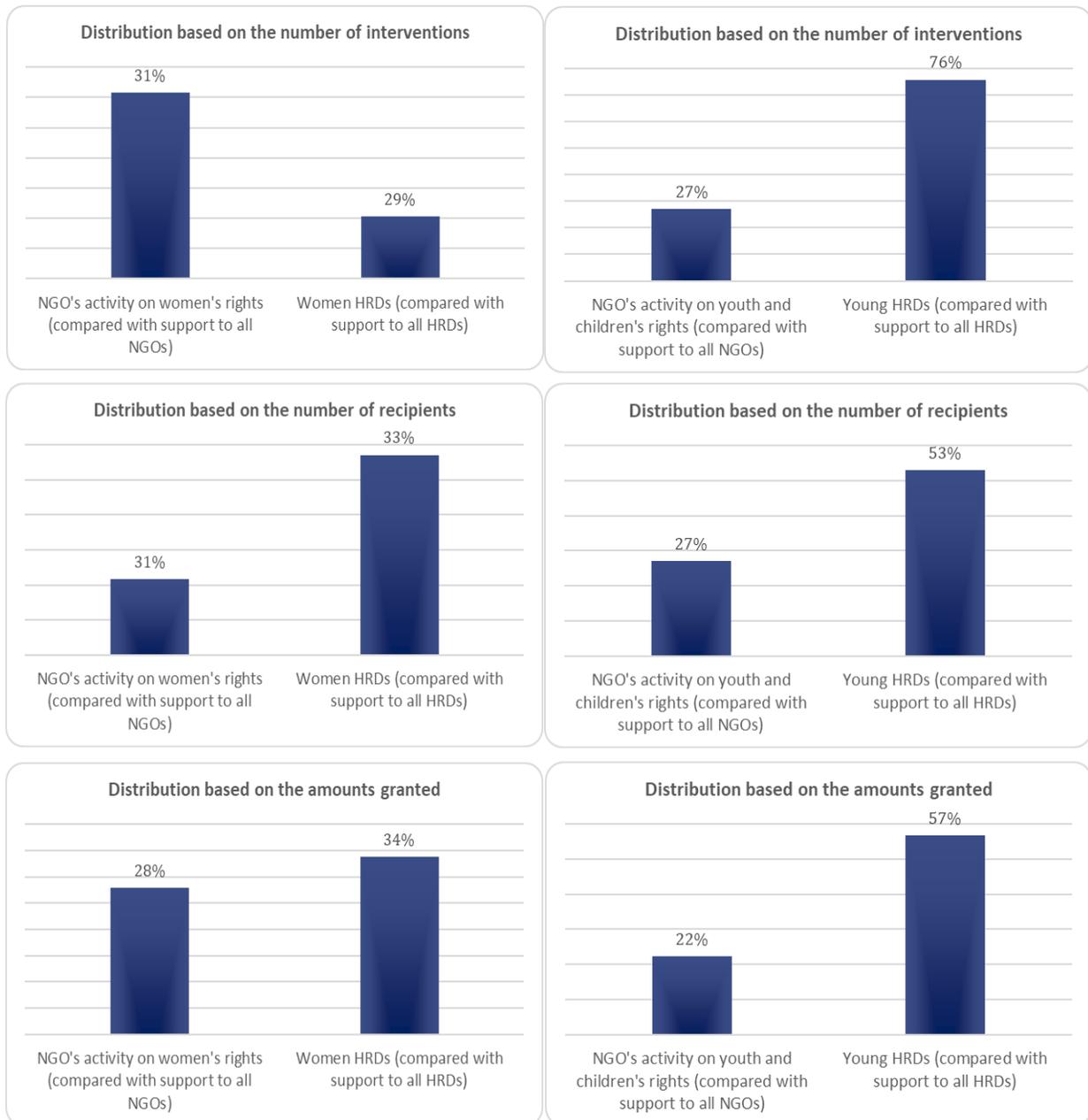
In addition to providing funds, one of the Foundation's main objectives is to help vulnerable defenders and NGOs to pursue their mission in the long term. In this view, the Foundation specifically followed up on 73% of its financial interventions. In particular, it acted as an intermediary for its partners to strengthen their collaborations, and to access trainings and funding.

This type of follow-up is especially important for emerging initiatives as it enables them to share information, learn from other experiences, and build new synergies and movements that reduce their isolation and enlarge their base of support.

In 42% of cases, the NGOs receiving this tailored coaching have secured funds from other institutions.

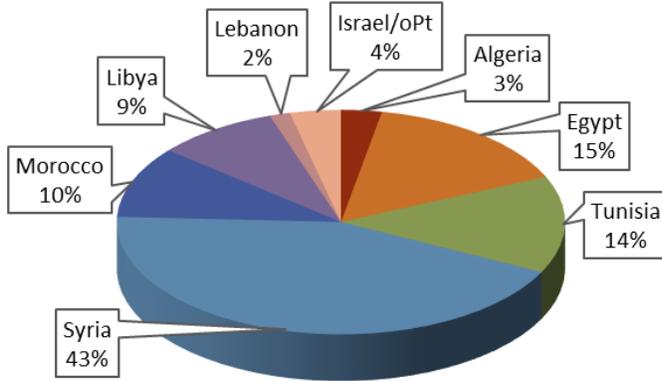
4.5. Gender and Youths

Women and young people are key beneficiaries of the Foundation's interventions because of their central roles in societies and democratisation processes. Protecting their rights and strengthening their leadership are of vital importance in a regional environment where they are both underrepresented in political and associative decision-making processes. Women and young people thus respectively made up 32% and 40% of the beneficiaries, and the Foundation allocated funding to groups and NGOs based on sufficient representation of women in their leadership.

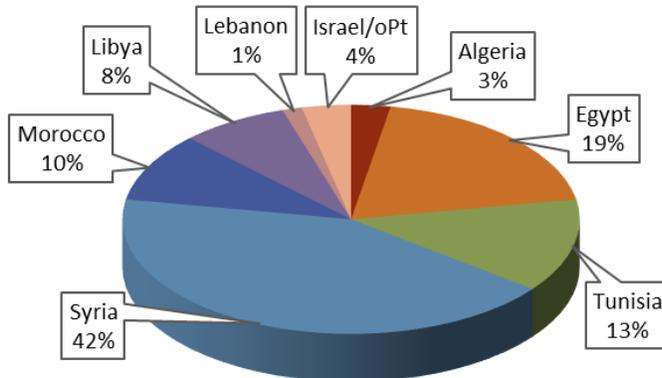


4.6. Countries

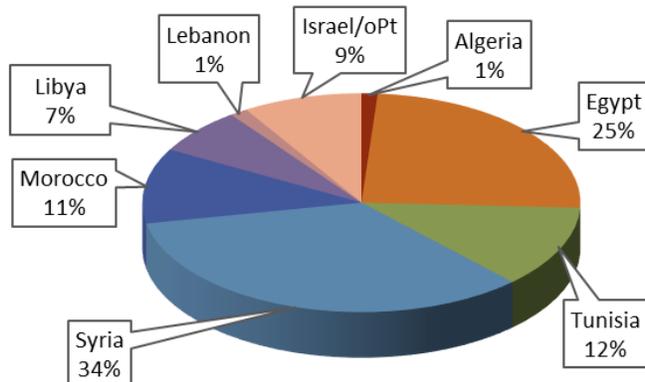
Geographic distribution of the interventions



Geographic distribution of the beneficiaries



Geographic distribution of the amounts allocated



As in previous years, the protracted war in Syria and the gradual suppression of independent civil society action in Egypt were a significant focus of the Foundation's intervention in 2017. Against a background of impunity, the Foundation's interventions focused on protecting defenders, helping them to document violations and assist victims, principally defenders themselves.

In addition, the Foundation did not overlook the protection needs of defenders in other hostile environments including Libya, Algeria, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, which make up 16% of the Foundation's interventions in 2017.

Lastly, the decentralisation and legislative reform processes underway in Tunisia and Morocco call for increased commitment and funding for local associations in order to address regional disparities and prevent democratic backsliding. 24% 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

Nine donors and private foundations have entrusted the Foundation and contributed to its activity with approximately 2,3 million Euros in 2017.¹⁶ Welcomed core support to the Foundation by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has ended, as has a specific contract with the European Commission to support Syrian human rights actors to combat impunity, which ended in July.

In the meantime, the Sigrid Rausing Trust has increased its core support to the Foundation for the next three years, and two new partners, i.e. the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) and the Open Society Foundations, will be contributing to its activity for the next two years.

Unrestricted funding accounted for 45% of the income of the Foundation in 2017.¹⁷

5.2. Information and 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.

5.3. Evaluation

An internal management and control audit was carried out by KPMG at the beginning of 2017. The overall outcome was positive, and a number of tangible decisions and internal policies were revised by the Board during the year. This includes a revision of the financial manual and the adoption of a risk management policy in 2017. Moreover, an anti-corruption code of conduct and a dashboard to strengthen the monitoring of grantees' expenses will be made in 2018.

5.4. Internal governance

The Board, composed of 12 members working on a voluntary basis, met twice in 2017, in April and October, to discuss the Foundation's strategy, programmatic and financial directions, and to consider applications from NGOs in the region. It was also regularly consulted and approved all requests for urgent support during the year.

¹⁶ Compared to 2016, the annual operational budget of the Foundation increased by 7%.

¹⁷ Unrestricted core grants were awarded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the Sigrid Rausing Trust (SRT), the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DAPP) and the Open Society Foundations (OSF), while 55% of the grants were provided to cover specific projects or countries by the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) and the European Union's Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (NEAR), the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF) and the Network for Social Change (NSC).

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;
- Frances Topham Smallwood (graduate in international relations and Middle Eastern studies), full-time employee as Regional Coordinator for Mashreq in France;
- Seif Taha (graduate in political sciences), full-time employee as Regional Coordinator for Mashreq in Denmark;
- 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.

Ayesha Alafifi (graduate in international relations), then Marion Gauer (graduate in Euro-Mediterranean public policies) were recruited as full-time interns in Denmark for periods of at least six months to assist programme and administration staff.

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.¹⁸

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

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

Appendix: Synopsis of Grant Applications

1. Overview of the Number of Grant Applications

In 2017, the Foundation received and reviewed **711** grants applications.

Per status		
<i>Granted</i>	107	15%
<i>Pending</i>	185	26%
<i>Rejected</i>	419	59%

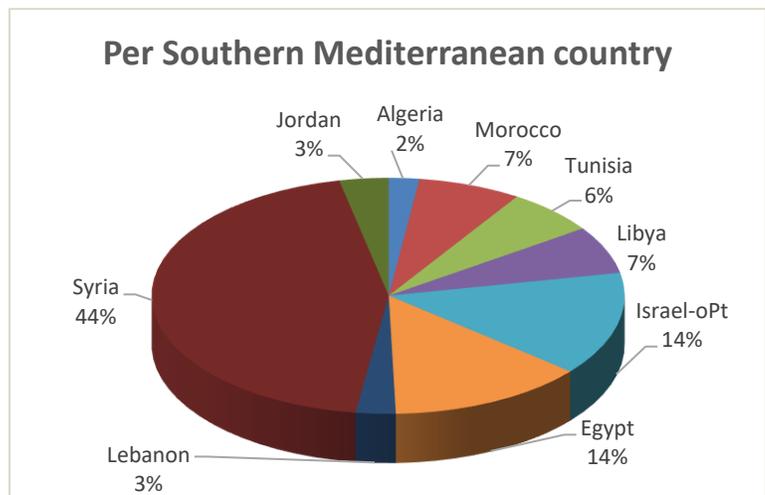
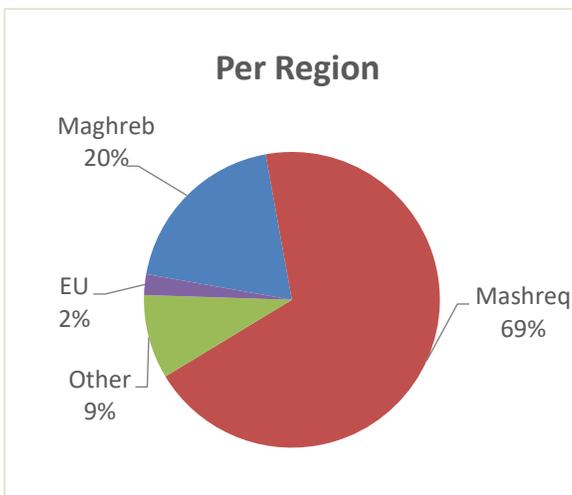
Per type		
<i>Urgent</i>	192	27%
<i>Standard</i>	369	52%
<i>Inquiry</i>	150	21%

The total amount granted by the Foundation in 2017 was **€ 1,660,407**.

2. Geographic Distribution

A total of **620** applications originated from the Southern Mediterranean region (representing **87%** of all applications received).

In particular, the Foundation recorded an increase of **92%** of applications from Syria compared to 2016.



3. Reasons for Rejection

Below is a list of the main reasons which have justified the ineligibility of the applications received in 2017:

- The activities suggested fell outside 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 **15%** of all the proposals rejected.
- The proposal was not in line with the Foundation’s main criteria (i.e. quality as a defender, situation, approach and necessity). These applications accounted for **50%** of all proposals rejected.
- The activities suggested were not innovative and failed to support universally recognised human rights standards. These applications accounted for **29%** of all proposals rejected.
- Applications were rejected due to a general lack of information and/or inherent problems with the grantee (including negative feedback received from other partners and donors). These applications accounted for **6%** of all rejected proposals.

In cases where applications fell outside the Foundation’s mandate, the Secretariat advised and directed a few applicants to alternative donors. This service has, in particular, been provided for cases where individual defenders are facing threatening situations in other regions. Rejected applications redirected to other potential partners and donors accounted for **6%** of all the rejected applications.

4. Average response time

As a rule, the Foundation aims to make sound and swift decisions regarding the applications received. The interval between the reception of the application and the Foundation’s response is illustrated in the chart below:

Total Average Response time*	8 days
<i>Inquiry average</i>	5 days
<i>Urgent average</i>	4 days
<i>Standard average</i>	11,5 days

*this total reflects 80 percent of the applications received.