



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



# ACTIVITY REPORT

## 2022

We asked our 2022 local partners to describe EMHRF in three words.  
The above Word Cloud shows their responses.

The implementation of EMHRF's activities and the publication of this report have been made possible thanks to the partnerships with and contribution received from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DAPP), the European Commission, the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, the Sigrid Rausing Trust, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the Open Society Foundations and the UN Women's Peace & Humanitarian Fund.

The contents of this report are the sole responsibility of the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders (EMHRF) and does not reflect in any way the positions of the above-mentioned partners.



The writing of this report comes at a time when we have learned of the passing of one of the Foundation's Board members, Ms. Bassma Kodmani, at the beginning of March 2023.

This report reflects her decisions and her unwavering commitment to supporting human rights defenders in the Middle East and North Africa alongside us.

Her insights and legacy will continue to guide the Foundation's work.

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# 1. Summary



*EMHRF's grant was a light in the midst of the darkness of crises.*

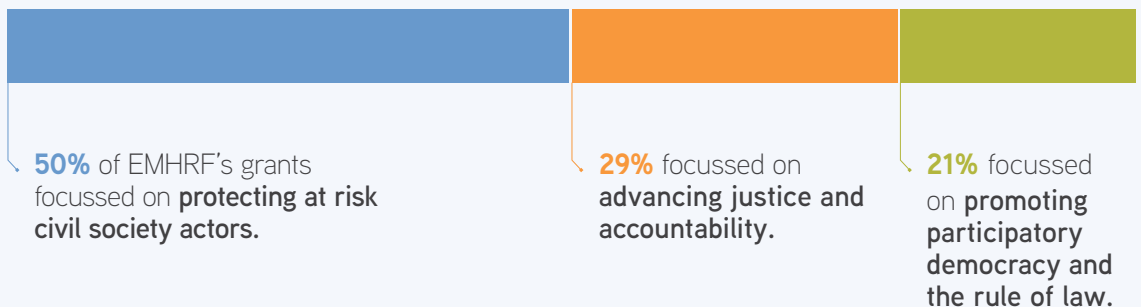
At a time when universal human rights standards seem to be under attack almost everywhere in an increasingly polarised global landscape, authoritarianism is making a vigorous comeback in the southern Mediterranean region.

With an unprecedented backsliding on the rule of law in Tunisia, Israeli oppression and large-scale violence against Palestinians, an escalating crackdown on civil society actors in Algeria and Jordan, and increased attacks on fundamental rights and freedoms in other countries, the Foundation focussed its work on protecting and catalysing the action of local human rights ecosystems in 2022.

The Foundation's support enabled human rights defenders to adapt and innovate, and this report attests to their considerable courage and creativity in defending, promoting and upholding human rights and the rule of law in these times of crisis. The supported civil society actors and initiatives have already reached and mobilised over 1.5 million people in their work.

Overall, the Foundation made more resources available to local human rights defenders than ever before, with a strong focus on protecting them against threats because of their work. **Half of our 148 grants in 2022 focussed on the protection of independent civil society and we doubled our support to women human rights defenders.**

**The main areas of support reflect the demands and priorities of civil society in 2022.**



**EMHRF followed through on its commitment to support those most often marginalised.**

**60%** of funded **defenders** and **initiatives** are active in or from **remote areas**.

**40%** are **young defenders** or **youth rights' initiatives**.

**35%** are **women defenders** or **rights' initiatives**.

**5%** are **non-binary** or **LGBTIQA+ defenders** or **rights' initiatives**.



*The support came at a time when we most needed it.*

More precisely, the Foundation provided **emergency support** to 85 individual defenders and 13 initiatives at risk of arrest or collapse because of their human rights activism. Thanks to this support, 90% of them reported in spring 2023 to have felt respite and an overwhelming majority have managed to pursue their activism. The level of needs, unprecedented compared to previous years, confirms trends observed in recent years of the necessity to safeguard an enabling environment for civil society and human rights activism in the region. EMHRF's response highlights its ability to adapt to the changing needs.



*EMHRF's support gave life to our ideas, and we are proud that thanks to you we will be able to open up to other partners.*

In the face of many defenders threatened in similar cases of unjust criminalisation, the Foundation innovated its approach and established **two solidarity funds for dozens of defenders in Syria and Tunisia – a method not used since before 2011**. In the framework of a solidarity fund, the Foundation works in close coordination with a local civil society organisation to ensure institutional follow-up of defenders who have been subjected to significant harassment because of their defence of the rule of law or whose lives have been threatened after years of detention and torture.

The Foundation also provided **flexible operational grants** to 68 local human rights organisations, mainly to a younger and more diverse generation of actors active in remote areas. As a result of these initiatives, more than four thousand victims of abuse have been assisted, nearly five hundred reports and articles have been written to shed light on the truth, and campaigns and advocacy have been carried out by survivors' collectives and civil society organisations to advance justice and the rule of law while ensuring that the voices of marginalised populations are central in these processes. Their work has elicited numerous reactions and actions from duty bearers, including representatives of states, national institutions and international mechanisms.

Given the entrenched impunity for perpetrators of human rights violations, **60% of these grants supported initiatives predominantly undertaking documentation, legal representation and advocacy activities to advance justice and accountability**. And 40% promoted participatory democracy with a focus on women, youth, LGBTIQ+, migrants and people with disabilities to address entrenched inequalities and foster reforms.



*The care that EMHRF's staff showed and the emergency relief have made a huge difference for our staff's feeling of safety.*

In recognition that defenders and organisations have needs that cannot be met through financial support alone, **the Foundation has further tailored how it accompanies grant recipients with care** to help them strengthen their safety and their human rights agenda. In 2022 the methods of accompaniment included practical advice on funding opportunities, sharing of capacity building and collaboration opportunities, referrals in support of long-term protection, mentoring on organisational and project development, and strengthening and broadening of solidarity links and alliances. Investment in additional capacity in this area will be stepped up in 2023.

In conjunction with these strategic directions, the Foundation **strengthened its IT risk management**, to consolidate and secure its action and those of its beneficiaries. It has also developed its **capacity for resource mobilisation** while taking further steps towards a **gradual institutional transition to a younger and gender parity leadership on the Board**.

In terms of mobilising resources for the support of civil society, **the Foundation's strategy of investment in supporting feminist protection and organising in the region has been recognised with the start of two new partnerships** with the UN Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund and with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. In addition, after years of consultations in which the Foundation played a major role, the **EU established for the first time strategic regional programming to support civil society in the southern Mediterranean**. In 2022, the Foundation has been selected as one of the six framework partners in this programming. Overall,

this reflects the Foundation's commitment to making more resources available to civil society actors in the region in response to their needs in the coming years.



*Sitting amongst the top [foundation] funders in terms of grant dollars and grant numbers, these funders [Urgent Action Funds, Front Line Defenders and EMHRF] are often the first (and only) to provide emergency funding to activists facing immediate threats.*

*(Advancing Human Rights: Foundation Funding for Human Rights Defenders, October 2022, Human Rights Funders Network)*

## 2. Financial Support to Human Rights Defenders and Organisations



Your efforts give hope.

The Foundation responds as flexibly as possible to the needs expressed by defenders and organisations. To do this, it utilises two open grant-making mechanisms – one emergency response and the other standard – to allocate support in the form of grants and specific tailored accompaniment for each grant recipient.

In 2022, EMHRF assessed 915 funding applications and inquiries and the Board allocated grants to 85 individual defenders and 80 human rights groups or organisations. The total amount of financial support allocated is approximately 2.6 million EUR.

To resource adequately the human rights movement in response to these applications, EMHRF scaled up the amount of funding granted by 7% in comparison to 2021, notably the emergency response mechanism by 36%.

	2012	2021	2022
Number of urgent grants allocated (amount in EUR)	42 (216K)	70 (347K)	80 (471K)
Number of operational grants allocated (amount in EUR)	39 (842K)	72 (2,066K)	68 (2,111K)
<b>Total number of grants allocated (amount in EUR)</b>	<b>81 (1,058K)</b>	<b>142 (2,413K)</b>	<b>148 (2,582K)</b>

Table 1: No. of grants allocated per year by type with amount allocated to nearest one thousand euros.

In terms of geographical focus, **Egyptian human rights actors continue to represent a significant share (38%) of EMHRF's financial support** due to the harsh conditions for exercising human rights work in the country. The support has also increased over 2021 in Jordan in response to increasing threats to the security and activity of independent human rights organisations.

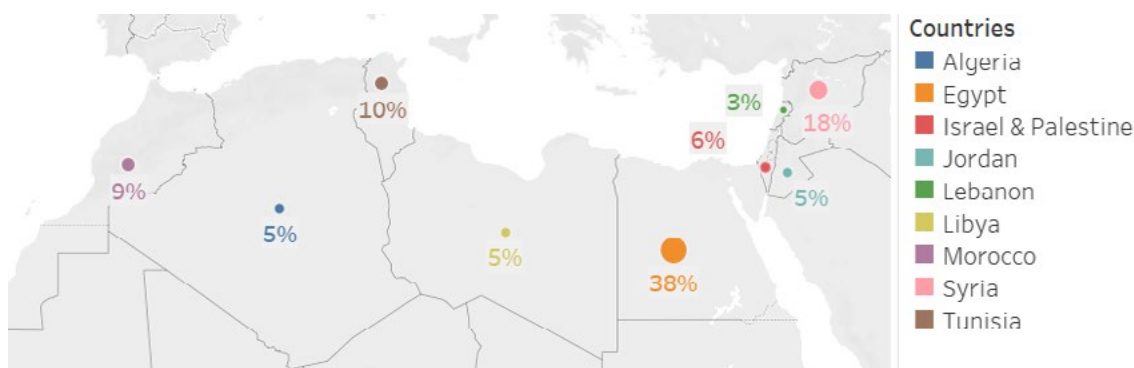


Figure 1: Percentage of financial support allocated in 2022 per country



It helped us to institutionalise ourselves on the ground.

**Urgent grants helped defenders** from across the region to **protect them from threats, feel respite and regain some sense of normalcy** in their lives. Specifically, defenders used urgent grants to cover basic needs including (mental) healthcare, to relocate to safer locations, to access legal assistance, and to further, such as through participating in training courses, their security and their personal and professional development.

### Emergency Response Mechanism in Figures

→ 80 urgent grants (€0.47 mil)

### Recipients

→ 85 individual defenders

→ 13 groups and organisations



*[It] provides a safe space for the women and girl survivors who we support and continue to support them.*

**Operational grants** enabled **organisations to consolidate their capacities and increase their prospects for sustainability.** Specifically, organisations used operational grants - which may be in the form of core/seed funds - to lead and experiment innovative and sensitive initiatives and to develop the leadership skills of women and youth.

Below you will find an overview of our activities by country and, for each country, two illustrative examples of our support. The examples give an insight into how local civil society actors operate, the challenges they face and the results they achieve.

#### Standard Support Mechanism in Figures

→ 68 operational grants (€2.1 mil)

#### Recipients

→ 68 groups and organisations

## 2.1. Algeria: Protecting Defenders from Retaliation

Amid a deterioration of the human rights situation, particularly with regard to freedom of expression, association, peaceful assembly and religion and an escalating crackdown against civil society by the authorities, EMHRF's strategy focussed on supporting urgent protection and coping strategies.

#### 6 urgent grants (€30k)

→ 4 individuals

→ 2 organisations

#### 4 operational grants (€110k)

As such, the Foundation supported defenders and initiatives who face arbitrary prosecutions as a result of their activism and invested in nurturing emergent diaspora initiatives that further protection of the civic space through documentation and advocacy. Furthermore, the Foundation supported innovative actions that help local residents reclaim public spaces in their communities and promote gender equality in remote areas of the country.

*A human rights defender and environmental activist in exile in the region faced financial and security precarity. He feared being kidnapped and sent back to Algeria where a heavy arbitrary sentence and death threats await him. An urgent grant from EMHRF and its accompaniment helped him to cover his essential needs and secure permanent resettlement in Canada. Since relocation in early 2023, the defender is preparing to resume his studies and continue his activism from exile.*

*With seed support from EMHRF, an emerging Algerian diaspora organisation took steps to become a reference on human rights in the country. It documented violations notably in relation to the freedom of expression and media freedom and collaborated with other Algerian and regional NGOs to provide evidence-backed recommendations for the Universal Periodic Review of Algeria in November 2022, and meet with UN representatives in Geneva. On 27 March 2023, the Algerian government accepted 216 of the 290 recommendations received in the Review.*



## 2.2. Egypt: Protecting the Resilience of the Human Rights Movement to Achieve Justice & Accountability

Despite steps taken by the government to display its willingness to open up the political sphere, including the launch of the National Dialogue in May 2022, new arrests of political and civil society actors have far outstripped recent releases, and death sentences are on the rise while signs of a structural reconfiguration of the regime's oppressive policies are still lacking.

**23 urgent grants (€127k)**

→ 22 individuals

→ 1 organisation

**19 operational grants (€860k)**

In this context, the EMHRF's strategy is to protect the safety of defenders who are at risk of arrest or enforced disappearance because of their legitimate work, while strengthening the resilience - through legal representation and innovative collective campaigns - of independent human rights organisations, whose contribution to supporting victims of violations and marginalised populations, including prisoners of conscience, women, minors, minorities, migrants and refugees, is crucial to laying the foundations for justice and accountability.

*A local human rights association, recipient of an EMHRF operational grant, continued its training programme for young lawyers and its provision of legal defence for prisoners of conscience. Lawyers active in the association trained 46 young Egyptian lawyers (35% women) from across Egypt on litigation and oral presentation skills with a focus on the judicial bodies that are most widely used to stifle dissent. With increased legal defence capacity as a result of the grant, the association represented at court 60 political activists, bloggers, human rights lawyers, labour unionists, academics, and journalists. 35 of those who accessed legal services were released from detention in 2022.*

*An Egyptian feminist initiative, recipient of an EMHRF operational grant, co-designed a large civil society campaign on social media to raise awareness on obstacles to realise gender equality in Egypt. The campaign reached over 300,000 persons and attracted support of a major Egyptian actress. Following the campaign, the Egyptian President directed the formation of a judicial committee to re-examine the draft Personal Status Law in June 2022.*

## 2.3. Israel-Palestine: Supporting Grassroots Civil Society Alternatives Amid Escalating Violence

Due to continued grave violations at the hands of occupation forces and further radicalisation of the right in Israeli politics, 2022 saw heightened harassment and intimidation of those defending Palestinian rights and the deadliest year for Palestinians in the West Bank in nearly two decades

**2 urgent grants (€10k)**

→ 2 organisations

**6 operational grants (€150k)**

EMHRF's strategy in this context is to protect and support grassroots peaceful and alternative human rights voices. It notably supported three Israeli and three Palestinian

initiatives with operational grants and provided emergency assistance to two Palestinian initiatives facing threats, one in East Jerusalem and one in Gaza and the West Bank. EMHRF mainly focussed its support on initiatives that use culture creatively to promote human rights, that seek to strengthen the political participation of women in refugee camps in the West Bank, and that create and maintain spaces for research, discussion and action for marginalised populations on human rights inside Israel.

*With an EMHRF operational grant, a theatre and prominent independent Palestinian organisation based in Jenin refugee camp has held strong. Despite having to halt activities for days on end, the theatre has maintained its youth acting school, organised its first Palestinian women's theatre festival, held cultural workshops for a hundred children, and staged and toured a production across the West Bank and in Israel that the COVID crisis had delayed for over a year and a half. In this way, the theatre demonstrates to youth different paths to peaceful resistance in a violent context.*

*In October 2022, an Israeli initiative recipient of an EMHRF operational grant launched a trilingual (Arabic, Hebrew, English) app. The app uses maps, images and stories and interactive content to show the manifestations of the Nakba and envision a just, viable, and peaceful solution to the ongoing crisis facing Palestinian refugees and internally displaced persons. It is a tool for learning, reflection and dialogue. By December 2022, it had already nurtured conversations within Israeli society and been downloaded over 3,100 times with most users inside Israel.*

## 2.4. Jordan: Preserving Independent Civil Society Spaces in the Face of Mounting Threats

Jordan experienced in 2022 a growing trend of threats from the authorities to the security and activity of independent civil society organisations such as the use of arbitrary press gag orders that limited press freedoms.

5 operational grants (€137k)

EMHRF has therefore supported initiatives among the most at risk to remain active on sensitive topics including independent journalism, feminism, reproductive rights and LGBTIQ+ rights, raise awareness of human rights creatively through cinema in marginalised communities, and protect survivors of human rights violations through legal representation and advocacy.

*A young women-led initiative used an EMHRF operational grant to spread knowledge on feminism and women's rights in remote areas of Jordan and the Arab region in addition to mobilising transnational solidarity in support of Arab women survivors of gender-based violence. With its online and face-to-face sessions, it reached out to 400 women from different backgrounds, and catalysed the formation of feminist spaces in the country as well as a similar movement led by young intersectional feminists in Sudan.*

*With an EMHRF operational grant, an independent Jordanian media outlet relocated its staff and activity to Europe where it resumed its reporting. The grant gave the team time to reorganise from abroad. Although it is yet to reach the same scale of audiences it had previously, the outlet has continued to relay the voice of vulnerable populations through its reports in Arabic and English. These reports triggered reactions and follow-up inquiries from stakeholders, including the UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria, the Canadian and the British embassies to Lebanon as well as the Japanese embassy to Jordan.*

## 2.5. Lebanon: Supporting Civil Society Efforts to Address Political and Economic Turmoil

The political and economic crises in Lebanon continued to heighten the already taut security conditions. For example, the crises strangle Lebanese trade unions and professional groups and further impede the investigations into the 2020 Beirut port explosion.

1 urgent grant (€5k)

→ 1 individual

2 operational grants (€65k)

EMHRF supported in this context one defender in an emergency situation and two innovative initiatives. One initiative aims to protect the rights of workers from outside the traditional labour movement and establish a unit that monitors the impacts of the economic collapse on working conditions in the public and private sectors. The other assists persons with disabilities, including survivors of the Beirut port explosion, in claiming respect for their rights and accessing justice and redress.

*A young Lebanese Syrian human rights defender in a precarious financial, security and mental health situation suffered months of harassment and illegal attempts to evict her from her apartment. With an urgent grant from EMHRF, the defender has been able to access mental health services and quality legal aid.*

*A Lebanese youth association, with an EMHRF operational grant and in partnership with other civil society actors, launched in December 2022 a media campaign to publicise the stories and preserve the memory of survivors of the 2020 Beirut Port explosion and empower them to claim their rights. The campaign puts at the centre of the search for truth and justice the voice of people with disabilities, relatives of victims and civil society. Through the stories, the association highlighted the diversity of backgrounds affected and the extent of the blast's impact on the Lebanese population, to engage the public opinion, in particular the youth, on the need to fight prevalent impunity in the country.*

## 2.6. Libya: Defending Human Rights Action in the Face of Violent Crackdown

Violent repression by security institutions and armed groups against civil society and its rights to freedom of association and expression attempts to silence human rights activities in Libya, further threatening the political process and the legitimacy of the upcoming elections, which have been postponed again in 2022.

**8 urgent grants (€39k)**

→ 8 individuals

**3 operational grants (€89k)**

EMHRF's interventions have thus focussed on protecting the safety and resilience of defenders while strengthening documentation of violations and legal assistance to victims, including journalists and media professionals, migrants, women, LGBTQIA+ people, and minorities.

*A woman human rights defender, heavily harassed due to her activism, left her leadership role in a civil society organisation out of fear for her life and her family's safety. An EMHRF urgent grant has helped the defender to address trauma and has started psychosocial therapy and built her capacity to face IT surveillance and slandering media campaigns in a safer location. She considers that EMHRF's support has truly given her the opportunity to resume her human rights activity. The defender has presented research in early 2023 at a conference in Tunis on women's economic empowerment in central Libya and participated in discussion groups on ways to support women politically and economically as well as the role of women in the economy.*

*A young women-led initiative, with EMHRF core support, launched a new project in Tripoli in autumn 2022 that furthers women human rights defenders' understanding of their rights and supports political participation. Notably it held workshops on political debate for women leaders and media sensitivity to women's rights. Among the 100, majority women, participants were parliamentary candidates, academics, journalists, public officials, and civil society activists. As a result, the initiative's leaders have gained confidence in their abilities to run such activities and to cooperate with public bodies as well as with other NGOs.*

## 2.7. Morocco: Catalysing the Participation of Marginalised Voices in Participatory Democracy

Although important reform initiatives are underway, they are struggling to make progress and significant concerns remain about limitations on the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly in Morocco.

**5 urgent grants (€19k)**

→ 2 individuals

→ 3 organisations

**9 operational grants (€222k)**

While maintaining the protection of defenders as a cross-cutting objective, the EMHRF strategy focussed on supporting civil society efforts to promote participatory democracy in seven different regions, to address inequalities and to empower marginalised

populations, including migrants, women and people with disabilities, to participate in the defence and promotion of human rights. Several actors were also supported to advance reforms, including of the Family Code 20 years after its adoption, in pursuit of gender equality.

*A migrant-led civil society collective used an EMHRF core grant to get back on its feet following COVID and advocate for the rights of migrants and support their social, economic, and cultural integration in Morocco. In particular the organisation, using evidence-based advocacy, assisted local authorities and civil society to better understand challenges and possible solutions related to migrants' civil status registration and access to education.*

*Twice EMHRF stepped in to enable civil society-led advocacy missions to be carried out as planned. One mission ensured that the voice of Moroccan civil society was present at a UN conference on right for persons with disabilities. This contributed to the adoption of new international guidelines on the development of care outside institutions, compatible with normal social life. The other mission enabled an NGO to strengthen its advocacy reach and present its assessment of the state of human rights in the country. As a result, numerous States in November 2022 formally notified recommendations presented in the assessment, notably on gender equality, freedoms of expression, assembly and association, through the Universal Periodic Review to Morocco.*

## 2.8. Syria: Protecting Defenders and Raising the Voices of Survivors in the Search for Truth

Syrians continue to face an ever-deepening humanitarian, political and economic crisis both in Syria and the neighbouring countries amid troubling developments of reconciliation between Syria, several Arab countries and Turkey that could lead to an escalation of violence with impunity. This could further hinder positive results on the truth, justice and accountability front that have seen light thanks to the mobilisation of Syrian survivors and victims. In a report published in August 2022 based on recommendations from the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic and consultations with associations of victims, survivors and their families, the UN Secretary-General recommended to the UN General Assembly the creation of a new international, independent, comprehensive mechanism to clarify the fate and whereabouts of the missing persons in Syria.

**33 urgent grants (€180k)**

→ 29 individuals

→ 4 organisations

**10 operational grants (€290k)**

In this context, EMHRF focussed on protecting the lives of human rights defenders, including former detainees; assisting victims, survivors, and their families to be at the forefront of truth and justice processes; and safeguarding feminist and LGBTQIA+ spaces that lay the foundations for inclusive participation and justice.

*With seed support from EMHRF, an emerging victim-led association gathered testimonies from survivors and documented more than a thousand violations committed in northern Syria. Thanks to the quality of its work, the association was invited by other victim-led associations to contribute to a position paper and guidelines. Published in summer 2022 both relate to the establishment of an independent international mechanism tasked with revealing the fate of the forcibly disappeared and detained in Syria, and the right for families to participate in the search for their disappeared relatives. As part of its efforts to increase its cooperation with relevant international bodies and provide evidence related to crimes committed in Syria, the association signed in October 2022 a memorandum of understanding with the UN International Impartial and Independent Mechanism 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.*

*To protect former prisoners of conscience from re-arrest and to help them heal from their physical and moral trauma, EMHRF, in collaboration with a local victims' organisation, established a solidarity fund to support a dozen former prisoners of conscience. The prisoners were released following the general amnesty of 30 April 2022, after an average of 10 years in government prisons. With this support, many of these activists were able to cover their most immediate needs and have relocated to safer areas. This allowed them to share their experiences with local and regional media as well as with human rights organisations. Based on their testimonies, among others, the organisation released an unprecedented report shedding light on the administrative structure and the existence of "salt rooms" in government prisons. Salt rooms are primitive mortuaries used both to preserve corpses and as cells for detainees.*

## 2.9. Tunisia: Protecting Civil Society Gains Amid Erosion of the Rule of Law

Tunisia is experiencing an alarming disruption of the democratic transition process that began in 2011. Almost unchecked powers have been granted to the presidency while the checks and balances necessary to protect human rights are eviscerated. By dismantling a number of national institutions, the independence of the judiciary has been compromised and human rights violations have increased, including restrictions on freedom of peaceful assembly, expression and the press under the state of emergency extended until 31 December 2023.

**2 urgent grants (€60k)**

→ 1 individual

→ 1 organisation

**10 operational grants (€187k)**

EMHRF's strategy has therefore been adjusted to help civil society actors protect themselves and preserve the gains made in recent years, particularly with regard to the independence of the judiciary, the right to information, and the fight against gender-based violence.

*EMHRF established a solidarity fund with a local CSO in the summer of 2022 to address the basic needs of a dozen defenders who were subjected to unprecedented reprisals for their human rights work. Thanks to this timely support and coordinated follow-up with other Tunisian and international NGOs, the defenders were able to access health care, support their families and continue their efforts to defend the rule of law in Tunisia.*

*A local women's rights association opened, with seed support from EMHRF, a shelter and a listening unit for women and children's victims of violence in a town in southwest Tunisia. The only actor specifically dedicated to defending women's rights and combating all forms of violence against women in the region, the association has so far provided a safe space, psychological and legal advice and medical care to nearly fifty victims of sexual, physical and economic abuse and continued to raise awareness on prevention and protection against gender-based violence, in accordance with Law 58/2017. After being recommended by EMHRF, the association obtained co-financing from a like-minded partner foundation.*

### 3. Tailored Accompaniment of Human Rights Defenders and Organisations

Defenders and organisations who seek support from EMHRF have needs that cannot be met through financial support alone. Over the years, EMHRF has built-up knowledge, skills, and networks that can help defenders and organisations meet some of these needs. Thus, it accompanies grant recipients with care as part of its support to strengthen their safety, their operational capacity and their human rights agenda in the long term.

The ways in which this accompaniment takes shape differ dependent on individual circumstances and the Foundation adapts its methods to the changing needs of civil society. In 2022 the ways this accompaniment took shape, with illustrative examples, included:

#### 3.1. Practical Advice on Funding Opportunities

EMHRF advises on funding, makes recommendations, and establishes contact between grant recipients and other likeminded organisations that can contribute to supporting their work in the long term. The Foundation notably referred defenders and organisations or acted as a reference for possible funding from over a dozen organisations in 2022, such as European and North American NGOs and foundations, and multilateral institutions. As a result, by the beginning of 2023, 24% of grant recipients had reported having secured funding from other sources.

*Leveraging Resources for Grassroots Initiatives in Remote Areas of the Maghreb: In spring 2022, a French foundation, as part of its strategy towards making more resources available locally, sought EMHRF's advice on grassroots civil society needs in Morocco and Tunisia. As a result of the collaboration, the French foundation complemented the funding that EMHRF had provided to six Moroccan and Tunisian grassroots initiatives with co-financing of around 100K euros. The initiatives are active in remote areas of the countries in support of women's and children's rights, and the combat against gender-based violence.*

#### 3.2. Dissemination of Capacity Building and Collaboration Opportunities

With the purpose to deepen knowledge, skills, and experience, particularly for a younger generation of civil society actors, EMHRF assists or provides support to defenders to access externally provided training and mentoring or formal fellowships or traineeships. The accompaniment of 12 defenders and organisations in 2022 included such tailored support. On top of this, the Foundation disseminated capacity building opportunities widely among supported defenders and organisations.

*Supporting a Diaspora Initiative to Access a Comprehensive Training Course: In February 2022, EMHRF introduced and recommended an Egyptian diaspora initiative to a 14-month training course offered by an international NGO focussed on victims of torture. The training consists of weekly online sessions to build capacity in the areas of advocacy, documentation, resilience and security. In November, three members of the initiative were admitted to the course, which also comes with a small grant to support their digital security and documentation activities.*



### 3.3. Referrals in Support of Long-term Protection

To strengthen the safety of human rights defenders at risk and help them obtain long-term protection, EMHRF provided attestations to substantiate the profile, situation and threats faced by 28 defenders or organisations in order to facilitate their applications for visas, residency and asylum, and referred them to national, regional and international organisations and institutions whose mandate is to provide rehabilitation or implement advocacy or solidarity actions. The Foundation also coordinated its actions with regional partners, notably EuroMed Rights and the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, particularly in Algeria and Egypt.

*Securing Long-term Protection for Exiled Defenders: Thanks to a specific partnership between the European Union's Human Rights Defenders Mechanism, of which EMHRF is a member, and the Canadian government, EMHRF submitted the cases of six defenders to the Canadian programme for the permanent relocation of defenders in exile and still at risk. By the beginning of 2023, two of the defenders referred had resettled in Canada and a third had been approved. The other applications are currently being assessed.*

### 3.4. Mentoring on Organisational and Project Development

EMHRF advises, when needed and requested, civil society initiatives on ways they could consider refining their strategies, projects or internal policies to ensure the sustainability of their initiatives and to develop their support prospects. The accompaniment of 11 defenders and organisations included such mentoring.

*Securing Appropriate Experienced Technical Support for an Initiative: An Egyptian organisation with long experience in legal aid, documentation and legal research conceptualised a project to digitally archive and publish judicial verdicts that pertain to reparation sentences for torture victims and their families in Egypt. As it lacked sufficient skills and experience to digitalise and so more easily access, analyse and secure its archive, EMHRF introduced it to specialised Swiss NGO and has since shepherded the collaboration. The organisation has, as of early 2023, digitised around 10,000 court sentences. EMHRF also established contacts between the Egyptian organisation and like-minded partner institution, which complemented support to the organisation in 2022.*

### 3.5. Broadening Alliances in Support of Civil Society

To complement regular exchanges with local and international NGOs, EMHRF strives to strengthen collective analysis between civil society actors, academics, state representatives and foundations on how events are unfolding and what are the possible pathways in the future. One of the objectives of these exchanges is to foster a concerted approach and broaden alliances to support civil society actors who face significant constraints in maintaining their activity and accessing the resources necessary to continue their work.

*Bringing Together Actors in Face of Heavy Repression in Egypt: EMHRF held a closed-door discussion seminar on the theme “What are the prospects for a future political opening in Egypt?”. Bringing together more than 60 local civil society actors, academics, international organisations, key donor states and foundations, a consensus emerged that recent steps taken by the government to display a willingness to open up the political sphere were merely “cosmetic”. This initiative is unique in the context of 2022 in that it widened alliances from such a range of actions towards a concerted approach to supporting Egyptian civil society in the long term.*

### **3.6. Strengthening South-South Solidarity and Learning**

In view of the increasing constraints faced by civil society actors in the region, EMHRF has further tailored its accompaniment in 2022 by hosting and facilitating, for the first time, a civil society partner to organise visits and exchanges to strengthen links, collaborations, experience sharing and learning between activists in the region.

*Facilitating Cross-Border Links for Feminist Activists: EMHRF organised a week-long visit for a delegation of young feminist activists, all active in EMHRF grant recipient initiatives, to another country in the region. Exchanges between feminist activists from both countries focussed on the convergence of struggles for the rights of women and non-binary people, assistance to victims of violence, and women’s access to land, among others. Through the visit, which included site visits, the participating activists built and deepened their relationships with each other and exchanged on their experiences.*

## 4. Organisational Issues

### 4.1. Internal Governance

The twelve-member voluntary [EMHRF Board](#), composed of leading human rights defenders and civil society representatives, remained unchanged in its membership in 2022. As part of a concerted and gradual transition to a new, younger, and more diverse leadership, EMHRF welcomed four new observer members to the Board. The observer members will formally join the Board when current members retire.

The Board met in May and November and took decisions on requests for support from human rights organisations as part of EMHRF's standard grants mechanism. As part of EMHRF's emergency response mechanism, the Board held consultations and took decisions on a rolling basis throughout the year in relation to requests for urgent protection from human rights defenders and organisations.

In view of the regional context, the EMHRF board decided to strengthen the security of EMHRF's activity. A cyber security audit was commissioned, an information systems security policy developed and all staff were trained on it. In relation to prevention and protection against sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, EMHRF updated its policy. Internal policies aimed at creating and maintaining optimal safety and ethics in EMHRF's operations are available on the [website](#).

As EMHRF's support to the local human rights movement is set to grow and to maintain the quality and efficiency of its actions, EMHRF decided to consolidate its secretariat. A staff retreat was held in June 2022 and a fundraising and reporting officer hired at the end of the year. EMHRF plans to recruit other personnel to strengthen the accompaniment of grant recipients in 2023.

### 4.2. External Evaluation

In 2022, the Foundation underwent an external evaluation of its programme in support of Egyptian civil society during the period 2018-2021.<sup>1</sup> The evaluation found that "EMHRF was indispensable in ensuring that some CSOs who chose to continue operation inside Egypt were able to do so."

The evaluation confirmed that **EMHRF built Egyptian civil society's absorptive and adaptive capacity to face challenges, to act on behalf of the most vulnerable populations and to question government policies, practices, and rhetoric.**

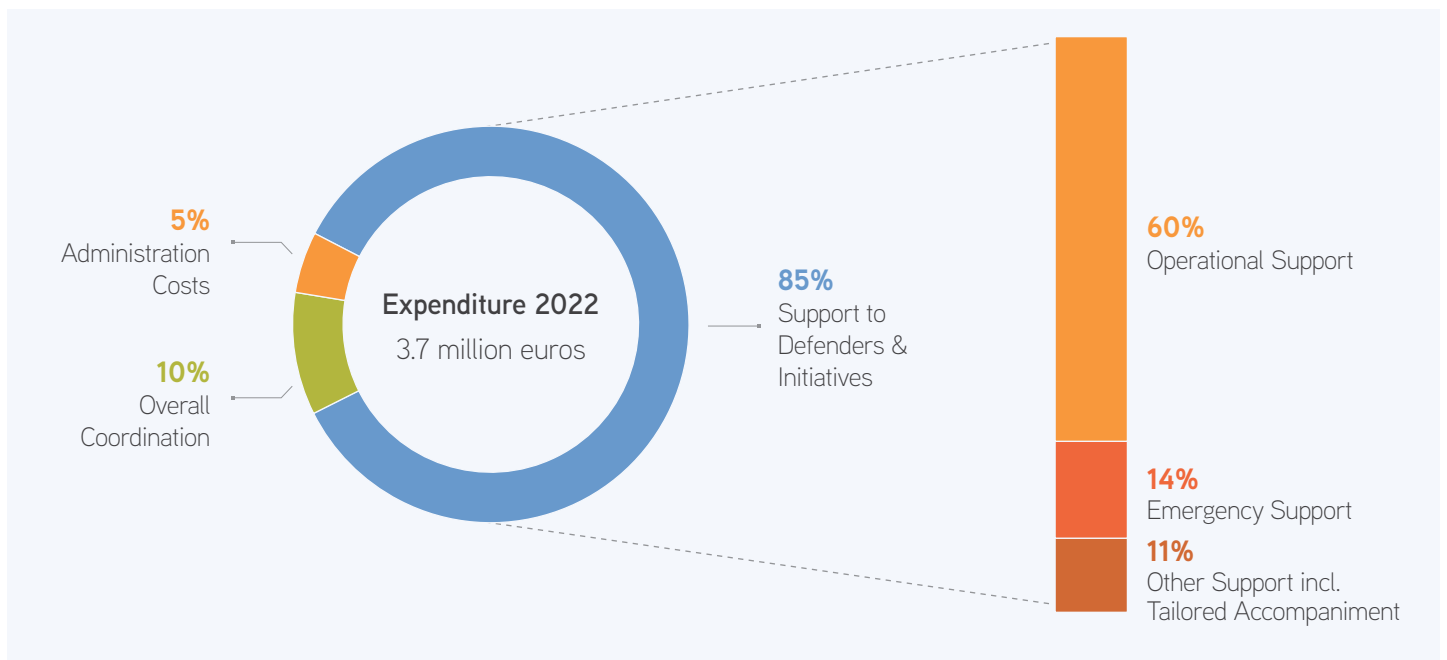


*"EMHRF nurtured a new generation of human rights actors through supporting new small and low-profile initiatives, nonregistered local grassroots groups, and young innovative approaches to grow, connect to their communities, and develop their working modalities, in addition to capacity building of young civil actors and lawyers. The program has contributed to facilitating new modality of work between exile and inside which can give new and existing CSOs and groups a margin of manoeuvre navigating regime oppression."*

<sup>1</sup> Final Program Evaluation, Supporting the Resilience of the Egyptian Civil Society, 15 July 2018 – 31 December 2021, 28.03.2022.

### 4.3. Financial Results and Partnerships

Overall EMHRF's expenditure increased by 11% in 2022 compared to 2021 and was mainly focussed on providing financial resources to local human rights defenders and organisations.



The results have been possible thanks to the trust and partnerships established or renewed with nine partners who contributed to EMHRF's activity with EUR 3,787,179.

- ▶ Core support amounting to EUR 1.6 million was notably granted by Open Society Foundations, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and Sigrid Rausing Trust.
- ▶ Project support amounting to EUR 2.1 million was granted by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the European Union, the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, National Endowment for Democracy, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and UN Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund.

Thanks to substantial fundraising efforts in 2022, EMHRF signed ten new partnership agreements worth 13 million euros. This enables EMHRF to maintain and expand its activity in the future. Notably partnerships with two new donors enable the expansion of EMHRF's activity to protect feminist activists and feminist spaces in the region. Five of the partnerships – with the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the European Union (two partnerships), the Swedish International Development Agency and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation – are for a period of at least four years.

EMHRF's 2022 financial statement, audited by BDO Denmark, is available on EMHRF's [website](#).

# Appendix: Overview of Grant Applications 2022

## 1. Number of Applications

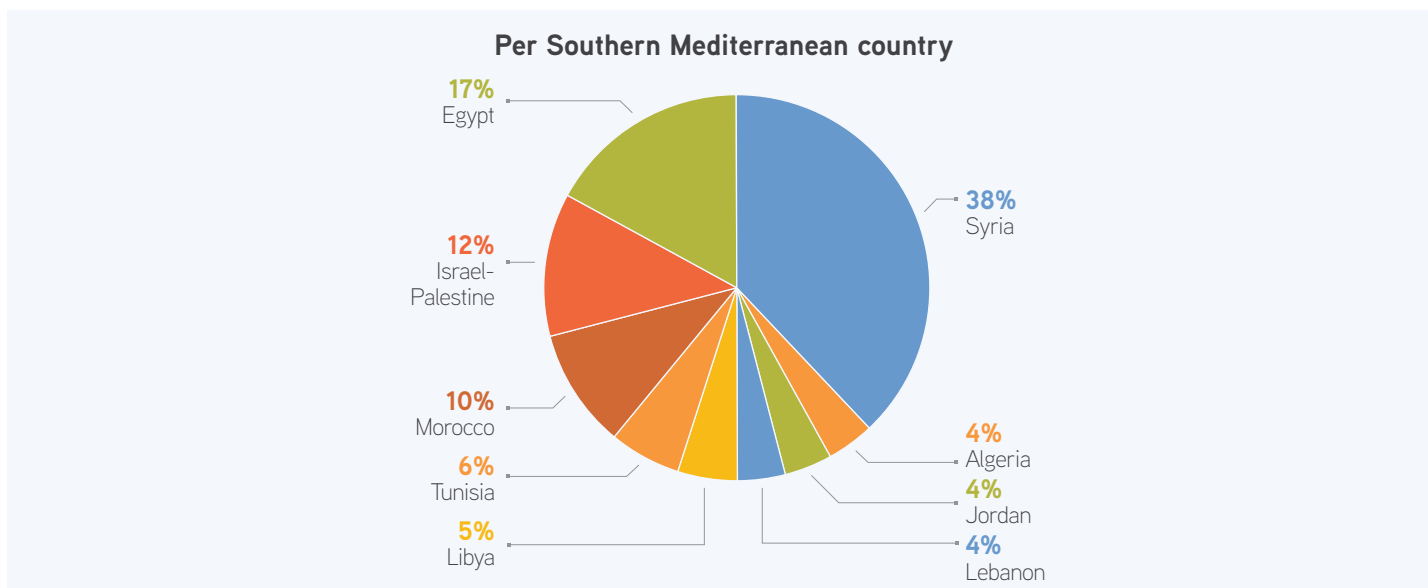
The Foundation received and reviewed **915** applications and inquiries (a 7% increase compared to 2021).

Per type		
Urgent	329	36%
Standard	253	28%
Inquiry	333	36%

After review, the EMHRF’s Board allocated financial support to 24% of the applications received and 8% of the applications remained under assessment at the end of 2022.

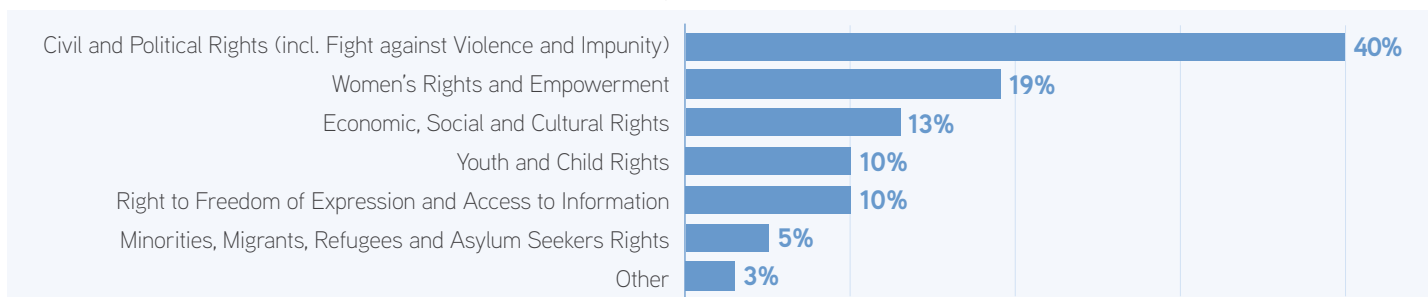
## 2. Geographic Distribution

**560** applications and inquiries (**61%** of the total) originated from the southern Mediterranean region, and mainly came from Syria, Egypt, Israel-Palestine, and Morocco.



## 3. Rights and Population Focus

Human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent. In 2022, the applications received focused primarily on the promotion and defense of civil, political and women’s rights, as reflected in the chart below. It is important to note that most applications touch on different rights areas and serve different populations. This chart is only intended to illustrate the main issues and priorities of their actions.



## 4. Reasons for Rejection

The reasons that justified the ineligibility of the rejected applications are:

- ▶ The applications did not meet the Foundation's main [criteria for support](#) (i.e. identity as a defender, nature of the proposal, necessity of the request and approach of the applicant) and/or received negative external recommendations. This accounted for **65%** of all rejected applications.
- ▶ The proposed activities fell outside the geographical mandate of the Foundation, i.e. Algeria, Egypt, Israel-Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, and Tunisia. This accounted for **27%** of all rejected applications.
- ▶ The applicants were not facing threats or could have access to other support mechanisms (for example, journalists could receive support from specific institutions), and/or the applicant's action and performance in human rights activism were not documented. This accounted for **8%** of all rejected applications.

In cases where applications fell outside the Foundation's mandate, the Secretariat advised and directed **84%** of the related applicants to alternative partners and donors. The Secretariat provided this service, in particular, to individual defenders facing urgent risks in other regions.

## 5. Average Time for Response and Decision

As a rule, the Foundation aims to make sound and swift decisions on the applications received, while acknowledging that the assessment may require more time in very volatile and sensitive contexts, such as Syria, than in others.

The intervals between the receipt of the application, the initial response from the Secretariat and the decision taken by the Board are illustrated below:

Average time <sup>2</sup>	Response <sup>3</sup>	Decision <sup>4</sup>
Inquiry	1 day	N/A
Urgent application	1 day	22 days <sup>5</sup>
Standard application	1 day	83 days

<sup>2</sup> The average time is calculated based on 80% of the applications and inquiries received in 2022.

<sup>3</sup> The Secretariat performs a due diligence review on each application received. This due diligence consists in first requesting information that may not have been provided in the application and holding discussions with the applicants to get to know them more and gather missing information to strengthen understanding of the situation and the relevance of the application. The average time for sending the initial response decreased from 10 days in 2021 to 1 day in 2022. Within 24 hours of receiving an urgent protection request, the Secretariat tried to schedule a phone conversation to obtain complementary information.

<sup>4</sup> The Board takes all decisions based on the application and the due diligence review performed by the Secretariat. Beyond an initial response and exchange, the Secretariat undertakes online and social media background checks for all applications to analyse the content and examine their situation, ethics, track record and performances and contact trusted references to obtain additional information and to mitigate against risks of sanctions' violation, in particular in conflict areas, where most grants are allocated.

<sup>5</sup> The Foundation granted 36% more funding and 14% more grants in 2022 through this emergency response mechanism in comparison to 2021.