



Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders



ACTIVITY REPORT 2025

We asked our 2025 local partners to describe EMHRF in three words.
The above Word Cloud shows their responses.

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1. Introduction



“Throughout the process EMHRF adopted a supportive and facilitative stance. Unlike a strictly administrative or top-down approach, we felt a genuine concern for support focused on capacity building, respect for our vision, and the sustainable anchoring of our organisation in its local and regional ecosystem.”

A Tunisian CSO and recipient of operational support.

Human rights defenders (HRDs) and their organisations in the Middle East and North Africa faced unprecedented pressure in 2025, driven by both major global shifts and increasingly restrictive local environments.

Globally, the weakening of international human rights and justice systems coupled with significant cuts to development cooperation have further eroded already fragile protection and support structures amid shifting priorities and declining regional human rights support in recent years.¹ At the national level, authoritarian practices have deepened, fundamental freedoms further curtailed, conflicts have protracted, and access to justice has narrowed. Together, these trends have left human rights defenders with fewer resources and diminished protection at a time of heightened need, significantly undermining their capacity to uphold and advance the universality and indivisibility of human rights.

While developments such as change-oriented dynamics in Lebanon and reforms in Morocco have created limited openings, civic space remained overwhelmingly repressed across the region. Intensifying state repression, conflict, surveillance, and disinformation have further constrained HRDs’ agency, while deepening structural inequalities have heightened their vulnerability. Global reductions in development aid have wiped out protection mechanisms and dismantled well-established local and national programmes, leaving independent civil society actors facing heightened reprisals, particularly feminist, LGBTIQ+, and justice and accountability-focused defenders and their organisations.

In this highly challenging context, where the full impact of these profound shifts is only beginning to emerge, EMHRF, which is led by civil society representatives, has focused on **strengthening local protection and resilience for the most threatened defenders and organisations enabling them to pursue their human rights agenda.**

In view of the evolving context and as part of a proactive risk management approach, EMHRF heeded its own advice internally, paused to reflect, developed its 2025-2030 strategy and introduced measures to safeguard its work, including taking steps to adapt its governance structure and strengthen its data protection, communication, and financial systems. Furthermore, EMHRF expanded its collaborations and partnerships, recognising that **future protection and support structures must be more collaborative, while ensuring that vital resources continue to reach human rights defenders and their organisations in the Southern Mediterranean.**

EMHRF Support in 2025

Grants:

→ 181 urgent and operational grants

Amount:

→ €3.4m

Recipients:

→ 201 human rights defenders and organisations

Externally, EMHRF provided **over €3m in flexible financial support and tailored accompaniment to individual human rights defenders and to local civil society organisations in support of their protection, innovation and sustainability.** As part

¹ [ProtectDefenders.eu's latest financial analysis](#), published in December 2025 with EMHRF participation and guidance, shows that even before the major funding 2025 cuts public funding for HRDs in the MENA region had fallen to USD 29 million or 5% of global allocations in 2021-2023. This marks a decline, despite worsening crises in the region, from 7% in 2017-2020.



"EMHRF is committed to providing emergency support at needed and crucial times. This was greatly appreciated. You have given us a ray of hope to continue our work and survive in this violent and inhumane situation on the ground, compounded by the harsh realities of depleted funding."

A Palestinian women-led CSO and recipient of emergency support.

of EMHRF's efforts to build the resilience of the movement, this accompaniment has provided spaces for discussion and exchange, opened opportunities for collaboration, and contributed to creating and strengthening links between civil society actors, academics, and funders working towards shared priorities.

The main areas of EMHRF support reflected the demands and priorities of local defenders in 2025:



2025 was a year where EMHRF more than doubled its support to LGBTIQ+ defenders and initiatives in response to renewed and severe crackdowns. It also increased bridging support to sustain justice and accountability initiatives amid protracted mass human rights and international humanitarian law violations and widespread impunity, while collective action and narrative-setting became even more central to defending and advancing fundamental freedoms.

With EMHRF's support, human rights defenders and their organisations not only protected their safety and agency, but adapted and pioneered actions and ideas that contributed to advancing justice and accountability, promoting participatory democracy and implementing human rights reforms.

As a result, and through inclusive and collective action, civil society supported thousands from marginalised groups to claim their rights, provided vital legal and rehabilitation assistance to prisoners of conscience and other victims of violations, including survivors of sexual- and gender-based violence, and contributed to significant policy reforms. Influencing public opinion, millions were reached with pro-rights narratives.

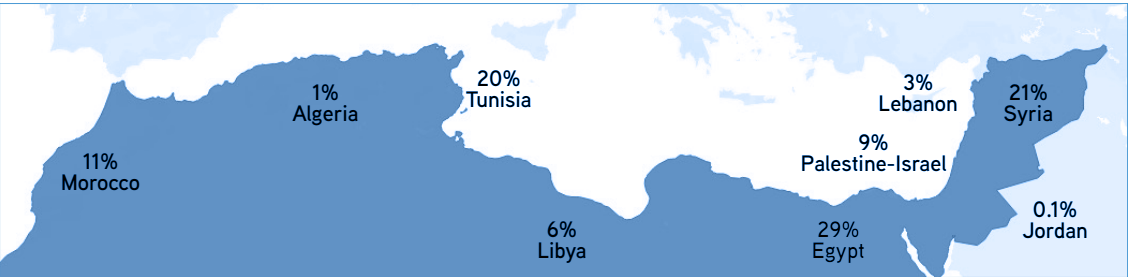
2. Financial Support to Human Rights Defenders and Organisations

EMHRF anticipates and responds as flexibly as possible to the needs expressed by defenders. To this end, it uses two open grant-making mechanisms – one emergency response and the other core/operational support – to allocate support in the form of financial grants and provide tailored accompaniment to each grant recipient.

In 2025, EMHRF received and assessed 744 inquiries and applications from its region of focus, with a significant increase from Tunisia (+50%) compared to previous years. Requests for urgent support remained stable, reflecting the persistent repression and difficult conditions defenders continue to face. By contrast, requests for operational support rose by 13% and surpassed 400 for the first time, underscoring how funding cuts and additional restrictions had immediate and tangible effects on civil society’s ability to function.

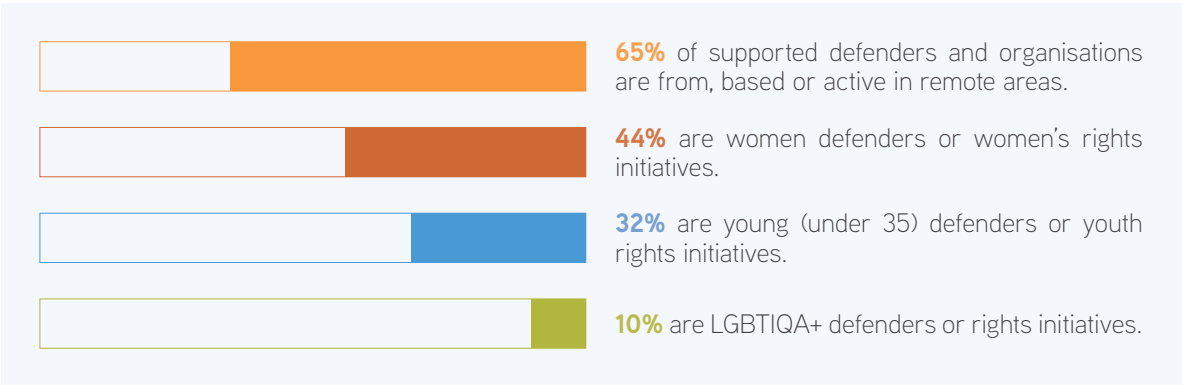
In response, the EMHRF Board allocated grants in support of 114 individual human rights defenders and 87 human rights movements and organisations, amounting to €3.4m in total. Highlighting the scale of crises that defenders faced in the region, 55% of EMHRF’s interventions were through its emergency response mechanism.

Egyptian, Syrian, and Tunisian human rights actors were the main recipients of support, accounting for 70% of the financial support allocated. Each context presented distinct challenges, ranging from entrenched authoritarianism and repression in Egypt, to death threats, widespread disinformation, and harassment of critics of the new authorities in Syria, to an escalating crackdown in Tunisia, all of which shaped EMHRF’s response.



Percentage of financial support allocated in 2025 per country

Moreover, EMHRF continued to follow through on its commitment to **support those most often marginalised**. In response to increasing threats and pressures against the LGBTIQA+ movement, LGBTIQA+ defenders and rights initiatives represented 10% of all grant recipients in a single year for the first time.²



2 In 2023 and 2024, LGBTIQA+ defenders and rights initiatives represented 4% and 5% of grant recipients respectively.

2.1. Emergency Support



“Your support came at a critical moment and truly felt like a lifeline. It allowed me to navigate a difficult situation with stability and dignity, and for that, I’m deeply grateful.”

A Libyan woman human rights defender and recipient of emergency support.

In 2025, EMHRF faced another year of exceptionally high protection needs. HRDs in the Southern Mediterranean experienced heightened physical threats and intensified judicial and digital harassment, particularly targeting WHRDs and LGBTIQ+ defenders and escalating emergency relocation needs. At the same time, mounting legal and financial pressures threatened the very existence of independent organisations, especially feminist, LGBTIQ+, and justice- and accountability-focused groups. Repression and violence continued to be the primary obstacles confronting local defenders, organisations, and movements.

To protect human rights ecosystems in contexts that swiftly change, and in which needs evolve and can drastically increase, EMHRF demonstrated its adaptability, its flexibility and its ability to get support rapidly to where it is needed. It provided **emergency protection support** to 114 individual defenders and 11 CSOs facing direct challenges to their agency and at risk of attacks, detention, death or collapse.³

Emergency Support in Figures

→ 100 urgent grants (€0.63m)

Recipients:

→ 114 individual defenders

→ 11 CSOs

Urgent grants helped defenders, associations and movements from across the region to protect themselves from threats, feel respite and regain some sense of normalcy in their lives. **With EMHRF support, the overwhelming majority of the recipient defenders took steps that helped them to pursue their activism and cause.**

Specifically, defenders used urgent grants to cover basic needs including (mental) healthcare, to relocate to safer locations, to access legal assistance, to protect their relatives, or to further, such as through participating in training courses, their security and their personal and professional development.

Here below are some **illustrative examples** of the threats defenders faced and how EMHRF urgent support helped them.

*In **Gaza**, EMHRF’s urgent support enabled a young, displaced woman human rights defender and journalist -documenting the experiences of women and children through interviews and video, and who had lost her mentor to killing - to rent accommodation for herself and her family and replace her damaged smartphone. This contributed greatly to her ability to continue her activism. As she noted “The grant gave me a temporary sense of security, enabling me to continue my work without extreme daily pressure and challenges linked to the broader context.”*

*After new arbitrary judicial charges were brought against him in relation to his work, an **Egyptian** human rights defender was forced to flee in early 2025. With EMHRF’s urgent support, he relocated and stabilised his situation in exile and continued speaking out through Egyptian and international media, including on the deteriorating conditions for political detainees at detention facilities, despite being sentenced in absentia to imprisonment. EMHRF also coordinated closely with other protection mechanisms and enabled him to secure additional support.*

³ An urgent grant may be allocated in support of more than one HRD or CSO.

*After years of escalating online harassment, a young **Syrian** woman human rights defender relocated to safety within the country. With EMHRF's referral, she received specialised cybersecurity support that strengthened her protection and confidence. She then launched a volunteer initiative promoting digital citizenship and countering online hate, offering women practical resources and workshops. "The EMHRF grant was a decisive turning point that helped me regain my balance and shift my work from spontaneous reactions to proactive risk management through psychological stability, strengthening digital protection, and sustaining community impact."*

*In 2025, EMHRF provided urgent protection support to dozens of **Tunisian** defenders and organisations, including LGBTIQ+ activists, amid an escalating crackdown. Supported actors documented violations, defended marginalised victims, amplified their voices, and advocated for respect for the rule of law. Alongside financial support, including the relocation of at-risk defenders and legal and basic assistance to those arbitrarily detained and their families, EMHRF also strengthened their access to digital security, psychosocial, legal, and compliance assistance.*

2.2. Operational Support

In terms of **operational grants** – which enable human rights movements and organisations to enhance their capacities and consolidate their sustainability – needs focussed on responding to massive and widespread violations and seizing opportunities of reforms while building the resilience of civil society action. On the one hand, grassroots, feminist, youth-led and community-based groups used seed support to strengthen their structures, while more established organisations benefited from the stability of core support amid global turmoil and tested new approaches, rethought strategies and broadened alliances and coalitions.

EMHRF provided in 2025 **flexible operational support** – which may be in the form of core/seed funds⁴ – to 80 local human rights organisations, many of whom are active in remote areas.⁵

With this support, movements and organisations played a central role in addressing inequalities and injustices across the region. Thousands of individuals from marginalised groups were able to claim their rights and reduce exclusion, while hundreds of prisoners of conscience and victims of judicial harassment accessed legal aid, with many more supported in their rehabilitation after release. Working in coalition with communities, CSOs, authorities when possible, international actors, and broader societal stakeholders, civil society advanced participatory and inclusive approaches, contributing to positive reforms – such as the reform of the Moroccan Family Code – and preventing harmful ones. At the same time, efforts to reshape public narratives helped pro-human rights messages reach millions through social media.

Operational Support in Figures

→ 81 operational grants (€2.76m)

Recipients:

→ 80 organisations

⁴ Fourteen of the eighty supported initiatives received seed grants aimed at developing or testing pilot ideas.

⁵ To address threats, four organisations receiving operational support also benefited from urgent protection grants. Two grants, one seed grant and one operational grant, were allocated to the same organisation in 2025; the latter was awarded following a positive assessment of the seed grant and the review of a new application.

Here below are **illustrative examples** of EMHRF's seed and core support to human rights organisations. The examples provide glimpses into how local civil society actors operate, the challenges they face and the results they have achieved.



"The partnership has been characterized by flexibility, clear and supportive communication, and a strong level of trust, along with a solid understanding of the sensitive and complex context in which we operate. This approach enabled us to focus on quality implementation, learning through practice, and responding to challenges in a practical and supportive manner."

A Syrian CSO and recipient of operational support.

*In the face of massive and systematic violations and widespread impunity, collaborative civil society action is crucial in ensuring that **truth, justice and accountability** is achieved even in the most repressive context. As such, EMHRF prioritised support to these efforts – particularly new or innovative initiatives led by grassroots and marginalised actors.*

Egyptian human rights organisations, with EMHRF support, provided legal aid and advice to thousands of victims of violations in different areas across the country, and pursued human rights documentation and research, raising the attention of local and national authorities and international bodies. Through innovative open-source investigation methods, including ground-level video analysis, one organisation uncovered compelling evidence of human rights violations. The findings received significant international media coverage and underpinned coordinated advocacy by national and regional human rights organisations for international accountability.

In an innovative approach that significantly streamlines and accelerates the process of analysing information related to human rights violations, an emerging youth-led Lebanese organisation utilised AI and identified over 25,000 videos, from a dataset of over 285,000 from open sources, as relevant and usable for legal accountability and investigative reporting. In collaboration with another Lebanese human rights organisation, it produced three investigative reports related to the targeting of civilian infrastructure, the media and heritage sites by Israel in its invasion of the country in 2024.

In southwestern Libya, an emerging human rights organisation established legal aid hotlines and provided legal assistance to over 200 refugees and migrants – including to persons held in detention centres. To undertake this work, the organisation collaborates with Sub-Saharan communities in Sebha, including from Chad, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Sudan. This support enhanced their access to justice, resulting, for example, in the release of a pregnant Malian woman from unlawful detention.

In Syria, survivor- and victim-led and grassroots associations have used the easing of restrictions on civil society since the fall of the Assad regime and organised mobilisation, awareness, and dialogue activities across the country. They have addressed issues such as citizenship and identity, social cohesion and civic peace, and transitional justice, while advocating directly to the new authorities and calling out abuses. One women- and victim-led initiative, focused on truth and justice in the Kurdish-majority area of Afrin in the north of the country, secured commitments from the National Commission for Transitional Justice to inspect detention facilities and investigate enforced disappearances.

A further key priority for civil society, given the persistent and high levels of inequality and abuse against women, is advancing **gender justice**. With EMHRF support, feminist actors across the region exposed violations, advocated for reforms, and provided assistance to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, including technology-facilitated abuse.

In Algeria, in Lebanon and Syria, local feminist and women-led initiatives have provided safe and inclusive spaces for women survivors of violence and violations to learn about their rights, document and discuss their experiences, and to collectively explore strategies to navigate challenges associated with such violence and their situations.

Two Egyptian initiatives used social media to great effect and reached millions with campaigns and guides on SGBV and sex education, including possible the first Arabic-language guide to living with HIV, and providing thousands of survivors, including of technology-facilitated SGBV, with access to support hotlines and legal and psychological services. Partnerships developed with major tech platforms led to the removal of thousands of pieces of harmful content from the web.

A women's rights organisation in a remote mountainous area of Fes-Meknès region in Morocco has provided free psychological and legal support to over 100 women and girls survivors of SGBV through its counselling centre. Since opening in 2023 with EMHRF support, the centre has become a unique regional hub, offering a safe space for survivors to access services, including justice, rebuild confidence, and regain agency.

An Amazigh-language theatre production in southern Morocco broke taboos by highlighting the realities and intersecting discrimination faced by minority women and girls in remote areas. As well as receiving widespread media coverage, the play won a national award and prompted engagement from authorities, leading to government-supported performances across the country.

Innovative and collective advocacy by feminist associations sustained pressure on the Moroccan government to uphold its commitments on eliminating violence against women, reforming the Family Code, and advancing equality. Digital campaigns with pop artists and influencers reached over five million people, helping shift social norms, promote women's freedom of movement, and challenge sexual harassment. At the same time, evidence-based advocacy by a rural, women-led youth initiative prompted parliamentary questions on the conditions of women agricultural workers. The second Feminist Assembly, bringing together over 200 activists and stakeholders from diverse backgrounds, generations and locations, secured high-level commitments aligned with feminist demands, including calls by senior officials for comprehensive Labour Code reform and the integration of economic violence into public policy.

Recognising the reach and influence of independent media in **reshaping narratives** and driving positive change, EMHRF has invested in strengthening the resilience of emerging media initiatives. This is all the more critical as disinformation, digital surveillance and manipulative messaging increasingly distort public debate.

An Egyptian media initiative, supported by EMHRF, significantly expanded its reach in 2025 to over 53 million Facebook users. It reported on sensitive issues, including the persistence of medicalised female genital mutilation, the arbitrary deportation of registered refugees and asylum seekers, the growing role of the military in the economy, and environmental degradation in Cairo linked to governance failures. Its coverage frequently prompted public officials and other figures to issue clarifications or corrections.

A nascent Tunisian media initiative, established in 2024, continued to report on the deteriorating human rights situation despite intense pressure, disseminating information on repression and ongoing violations of national and international law. It also provided a platform for human rights defenders, political actors, victims, and legal professionals to share testimonies, perspectives, and analysis at a time when censorship is becoming the norm, and independent journalists are increasingly criminalised for their legitimate work under restrictive legal frameworks, including the cybercrime law (Decree 54), thereby making the preservation of independent voices and documentation all the more critical.

3. Tailored Accompaniment of Human Rights Defenders and Organisations

Defenders and associations 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 their associations meet some of their needs. Thus, EMHRF accompanies grant recipients with care as part of its support to strengthen their safety, their operational capacity and their human rights activism in the long term.

The ways in which this accompaniment takes shape differ dependent on individual circumstances and EMHRF adapts its methods to the changing needs of the defenders and the contexts in which they operate. In 2025, the ways this accompaniment took shape included:

3.1. Referrals in Support of Long-term Protection

To strengthen the safety of at-risk human rights defenders and help them obtain long-term protection, including through international protection mechanisms, EMHRF provides support to substantiate their claims, situation and the threats they are subjected to. Consistent with its collaborative approach, EMHRF coordinates closely with other organisations, local, national, regional and international, whose mandate is to provide assistance in their protection claims, rehabilitation services or to undertake advocacy and solidarity actions.

After reviewing her application, EMHRF swiftly supported a Yemeni WHRD exiled in Egypt, connecting her with an Egyptian NGO specialised in providing women with legal assistance and with an asylum lawyer, and later providing urgent financial support. This enabled her to regularise her stay, protect herself and her children from abuse, and ultimately relocate to Germany where she pursues her activism.

3.2. Practical Advice on Funding Opportunities

EMHRF provides advice on fundraising, makes recommendations, and facilitates contact between supported defenders and initiatives and other organisations that can contribute to supporting their work in the long-term. Over the years, EMHRF has built up a strong network and close working relationships with other organisations, foundations and donors. In 2025, EMHRF assisted defenders and initiatives to obtain additional resources from dozens of these funders in Europe and North America.

Threatened Tunisian associations secured complementary financial support from a likeminded European foundation after EMHRF referred their situations and accompanied the organisations through the application process. For example, an LGBTIQ+ organisation secured core operational support to sustain its work after the end of EMHRF's emergency support. This enables the organisation to keep documenting and advocating for LGBTIQ+ rights in Tunisia and to maintain its legal, social, and psychological support for threatened community members.

3.3. Connecting Defenders and Enhancing Access to Collaboration and Capacity Building Opportunities

With a view to enhancing knowledge, skills, and experience, particularly for a younger generation of civil society actors, EMHRF assists and provides support to defenders to access training, peer mentoring and fellowship opportunities, and thus expand their support network with actors in line with their missions.

Upon the recommendation of EMHRF, an emerging Algerian human rights organisation joined two civil society working groups. One is focused on strengthening collaboration between Algerian human rights organisations while the other is focused on promoting solidarity and coordinated action on migration issues. As well as fostering the integration of newer human rights actors into established coordination bodies, joining the working groups strengthens the organisation's networks and the potential impact of its advocacy. Furthermore, with EMHRF's support, it partnered with a digital security association for comprehensive training for its staff members and activists, strengthening their digital protection capacities and risk awareness, and secured complementary support from another European foundation.

3.4. Fostering Concerted Approaches to Support Civil Society

A further function of EMHRF's tailored accompaniment is to support concerted approaches to assist civil society actors who face significant constraints in sustaining their activity. EMHRF thus coordinated closely and acted in concert with national, regional and international partners, particularly in relation to mobilising sustainable support for Algerian, Egyptian, Libyan and Tunisian defenders.

In February 2025, EMHRF convened a seminar bringing together more than 50 human rights defenders, INGO representatives, academics and donors to discuss the challenges, achievements and ways forward for human rights action in a country marked by structured authoritarianism and economic and geopolitical challenges. The event provided a rare space for defenders to freely speak and engage with others who work on or are interested in the state of human rights and civil society in the country. Participants highlighted a decade-long evolution in civil society strategies – from a focus on legal frameworks and international advocacy toward more grounded, intersectional approaches rooted in everyday experience. This shift from abstract, legalistic discourses to lived realities was seen as essential for relevance and long-term impact. They also stressed the importance of documentation, legal support and strategic litigation, knowledge production and storytelling – not only for advocacy, but also for preserving truth and collective memory in anticipation of future accountability. The role of digital platforms, grassroots feminist and environmental actors, and independent media was recognised as key in constituency-building and expanding the reach and legitimacy of human rights narratives.

4. Organisational Matters

4.1. Internal Governance

In 2025, the EMHRF Board held its regular meetings in May and November, during which it approved 81 operational grants totalling €2.8 million, set strategic priorities for the coming years and strengthened risk management.⁶

To clarify priorities in the face of the changing context, EMHRF set its 2025-2030 strategy. The strategy's ambition is to deliver a concrete, holistic, and reinforced response to the protection and support needs of individuals and organisations engaged in defending and promoting human rights across the Southern Mediterranean region. It has three priorities: 1) meeting the urgent need for protection; 2) building for the long-term; and 3) fostering solidarity, broadening alliances. In this way, EMHRF sets out with the first two priorities to continue to provide both emergency and operational support to strengthen the safety, resilience and sustainability of human rights defenders and organisations' agency. Towards the third priority, EMHRF will further create spaces for the human rights movement to rethink strategies, adapt tactically, recalibrate their approaches and ways of working, and collectively reposition themselves in an increasingly volatile and hostile environment.

As part of its proactive approach to risk management in a climate where far-reaching restrictive measures have been adopted in 2025 in several jurisdictions affecting the work of human rights donors, regional and local human rights actors, EMHRF undertook a legal review and an IT security risk assessment. These assessments confirmed that EMHRF has robust compliance and information security policies in place and recommended additional measures to further reduce risks which the Board took on board to strengthen EMHRF's governance structure and its data-protection, communication, and financial systems.

In carrying out its mission, the Board was assisted by a secretariat made up of 15 staff members⁷ and as part of the implementation of its well-being policy, in place since spring 2023, a psychologist continued to provide group trainings on mental health and wellbeing, individual check-in sessions as well as counselling and coaching for the secretariat.

4.2. Collaborations and Partnerships

In recognition of its unique role in protecting and supporting the agency of local civil society to defend and advance human rights and the rule of law in the Southern Mediterranean region, EMHRF was elected to the steering committee of a global rapid response civil society protection network, [Building Responses Together](#). In late 2025 EMHRF also became a member of the [OECD-DAC Civil Society Reference Group](#), which coordinates CSO participation in the Development Assistance Committee (DAC). EMHRF was also selected to be a founding member of a new global mechanism for the protection of human rights defenders and civic space, [Lighthouse](#).⁸

⁶ At its November 2025 meeting, the Board also acknowledged the intention of two members to step down as part of its gradual transition process and has initiated the selection and appointment of their replacements, expected to be take place in 2026-2027.

⁷ EMHRF continued in 2025 to invest in its capacity to provide tailored accompaniment while increasing its grant-making and expanded the secretariat by one through hiring in autumn 2025 a MEAL officer for the Maghreb region.

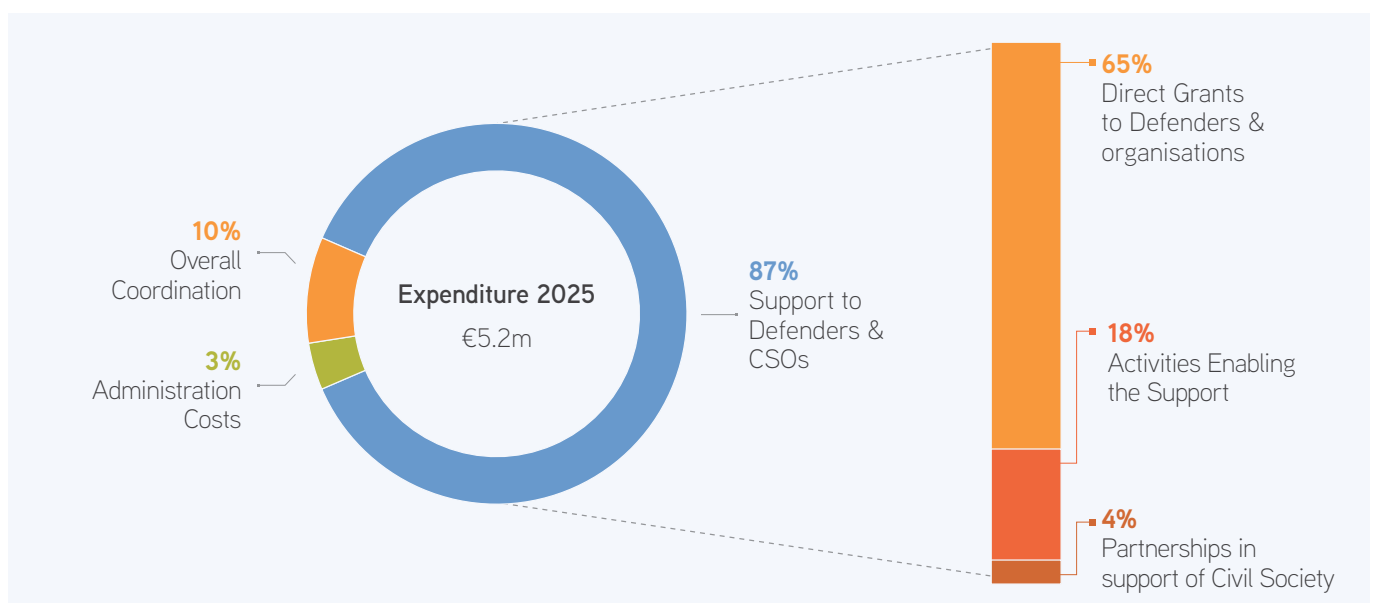
⁸ Beyond these networks, EMHRF is also a member of Ariadne, the Human Rights Funders Network, Journalists in Distress, and is one of the consortium managing the EU Human Rights Defenders Mechanism (ProtectDefenders.eu).

EMHRF is a regional framework partner of the European Commission and supported strong civil society consultation in EU policies concerning the Mediterranean. Playing an essential facilitating role – in line with its mandate, EMHRF does not conduct public advocacy – it enabled a significant number of local, national and regional civil society actors from the Southern Mediterranean, often excluded from discussion circles in Brussels, to access information on EU policies and articulate their needs, expectations and priorities. Based on extensive consultation with experts and Southern Mediterranean organisations, EMHRF co-presented along with other regional EU framework partners a common position paper on the Pact for the Mediterranean. EMHRF furthermore circulated to hundreds of its partners and grant recipients from the last years, including organisations operating in remote or marginalised areas, a public consultation survey on the Pact. In another vein, EMHRF shared its knowledge and experience in consultations on the development of the EU Strategy for the Civil Society, stressing that the experiences of civil society in the Southern Mediterranean region facing decades of shrinking civic space, legal restrictions, transnational repression, and financial barriers offer transferable lessons for the EU.

EMHRF further expanded its partnerships in 2025. It renewed its collaboration with the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs to provide support to Syrian civil society, with the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) to provide support to at-risk defenders from Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Syria and Tunisia, with the UN Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund to provide support to women defenders at-risk in crisis contexts, as well as with the EU to provide support to at-risk LGBTIQ+ defenders. EMHRF also launched in 2025 a joint action with partner organisations focussed on the protection of Tunisian human rights defenders and renewed a partnership in support of Egyptian civil society. Furthermore, EMHRF initiated a new partnership with the Open Society Foundations.

4.3. Financial Results

Overall EMHRF spent 5.2 million euros in 2025, 2% more than in 2024, reflecting the Board's policy of controlled growth and consolidation. In line with the strategy set by the Board and consistent with last year's results, 87% of its expenditure was directed towards supporting local human rights defenders and CSOs.⁹



⁹ Spend on staff salaries and administration in 2025 was within the 25% of total expenditure cap established by the Board. EMHRF's 2025 financial statement, audited by BDO Denmark, is available on EMHRF's [website](#).

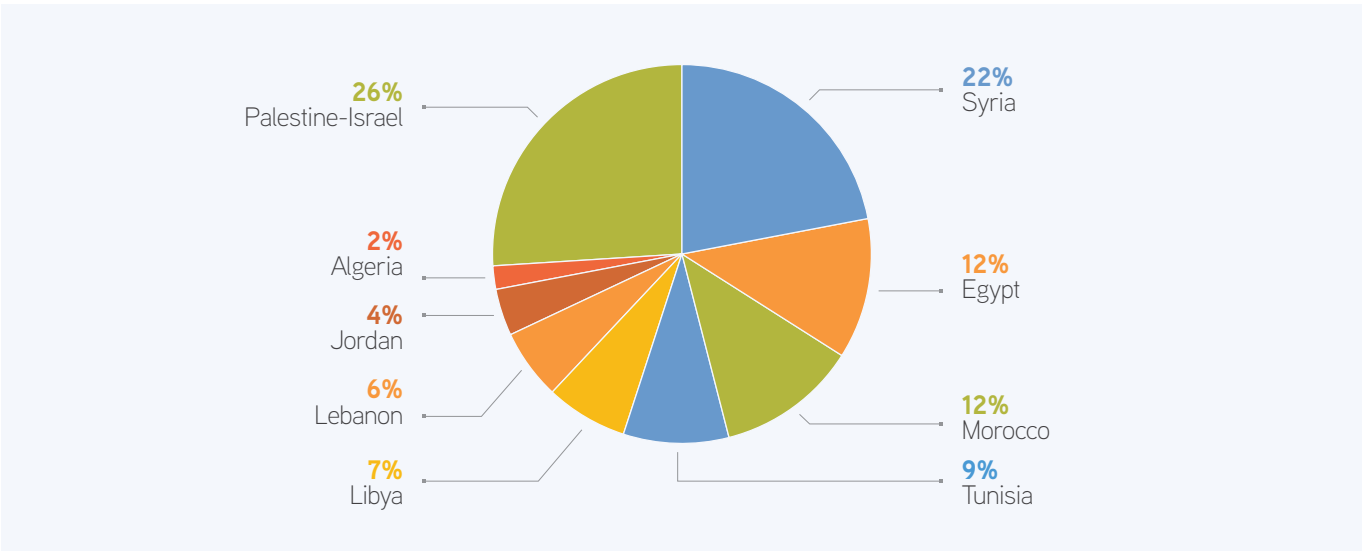
5. Appendix: Overview of Grant Applications

1. Number of Applications

EMHRF received and reviewed 744 applications and inquiries in 2025 from its region of focus, 269 requests for urgent support, 414 requests for standard support and 61 inquiries.

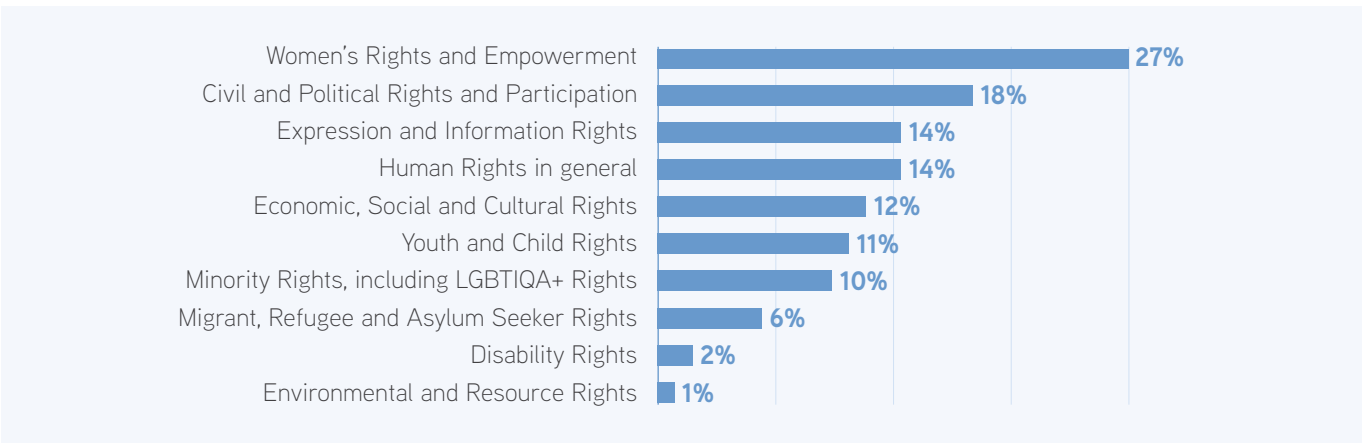
2. Geographic Distribution

The applications and inquires mainly came from Palestine-Israel, Syria, Egypt and Morocco. Applications from Tunisia were 50% higher than in 2024.



3. Rights and Population Focus

Human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent. In 2025, the applications received focused primarily on women’s rights and on the promotion and defence of civil and political rights and participation. 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 main reasons which have justified the ineligibility of rejected applications are:

- ▶ **60%** did not meet EMHRF's [support criteria](#) (i.e. identity as a defender, nature of the proposal, necessity of the request and approach of the applicant) or received negative external recommendations.
- ▶ **31%** proposed actions covering areas outside of EMHRF's mandate.
- ▶ **9%** involved applicants for urgent support who were not facing threats or had access to other support mechanisms.

EMHRF receives applications through two open mechanisms: one for [emergency protection support](#) and the other for [operational support](#). All applications are assessed against EMHRF's [support criteria](#) and are subject to a due diligence review. References are sought and verified as part of this process. Decisions on the allocation of support are made by EMHRF's Board. Further details on the granting procedures are available [here](#).