



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

# **Activity Report**

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## 1. Introduction

The protection and consolidation of the role of human rights defenders are now more than ever a central issue to be addressed in the face of divergent results in terms of democratisation in the Arab region. Defenders are key actors in guaranteeing respect for fundamental rights and creating spaces for dialogue that are conducive to the implementation of democratic reforms in their countries, and their actions prove to be crucial for building and maintaining the rule of law. However, these actions have been undermined by significant threats, financial difficulties and obstacles to creating alliances. In 2013, these issues remained central to the Foundation's concerns and actions in the region.

**1.1.** The **threats** facing defenders are particularly visible in the region's repressive and violent environments. The situation which drew the most attention was the armed conflict in Syria, where attacks became decentralised and subsequently intensified, culminating in the use by the regime of chemical weapons against the civilian population in August 2013. The number of prisoners of conscience, whose cases have been brought before the Anti-Terrorism Court set up by the regime in October 2012, is also estimated at 37,000. Add to this, the increase of abuses committed by the non-State sanctioned armed groups, many of whom have jihadist agendas. Although different, the situation in Libya remains a cause for concern due to the unrestrained cycle of violence perpetrated by a myriad of armed groups, not only in the capital Tripoli but also in Benghazi and Derna where a significant increase in the number of clashes and assassinations was recorded. Finally, the reforms in Egypt and Algeria have caused an increase in the number of repressive policies and practices adapted to facilitate a crackdown on peaceful protests and dissenting opinions. It is in these environments marked by tensions and divisions that the actions of defenders are most needed. However, it is in this context that their actions become the most difficult to take and are the least respected.

Because of their efforts to document repression and human rights violations by all parties and to provide assistance to a civilian population under attack, human rights defenders are faced with arbitrary and variant measures of deprivation of freedom, torture and ill-treatment. Such measures range from abductions and extrajudicial executions, restrictions of movement - namely in Syria and Libya - to all sorts of intimidations, slanderous media campaigns, judicial and administrative harassment - namely in Egypt and Algeria. Targeted attacks are sometimes carried out with the direct participation of civilians, whether paid or not, who are asked or willing to cooperate with the security services. Defenders' family members, including their children and parents, receive direct threats - and are sometimes incarcerated - as a way of forcing defenders into submission. In addition to these direct threats, there is an increase of indirect risks - namely in Syria - linked to the very nature of their activities aimed at monitoring and documenting large-scale and systematic human rights violations. These risks often manifest themselves as symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and have a significant impact on defenders' well-being and on the sustainability of their actions.

In the countries where many new threats are posed, the Foundation has given priority to the protection of defenders in order to enable them to continue their activities aimed at witnessing and fighting against impunity, at defending and promoting human rights as they are universally affirmed. Some interventions can be highlighted:

*In Syria, a young defender who organized and documented peaceful demonstrations in the streets of Damascus was threatened by members of the security services, who ambushed and imprisoned six of his colleagues. With the urgent support and the monitoring carried out by the Foundation, the defender went into hiding and moved temporarily to a safe place, before fleeing the country. This defender is currently developing and editing a new documentary on the Syrian revolution, in partnership with Syrian civil society organisations and a specialized institute which produces films carrying social values with important means of cultural and artistic expression.*

*In a climate where serious human rights violations are coupled with impunity in **Egypt**, a group of lawyers and defenders conducted an investigation on the violent events which took place in Port-Said in January 2013, and which resulted in the deaths of 42 people and thousands of injured. The report, submitted to the judge, presented eyewitness accounts and the data collected, and puts forward a certain number of recommendations, among which the need for further investigation and for holding accountable those responsible for human rights violations, as well as respect and adherence - by all parties, including the Egyptian authorities and security forces - to the universally-recognised human rights standards.*

**1.2. Access to funding** for human rights defenders, either individuals or organisations, is difficult in the region, thus threatening their expansion and sustainability potential. Although the strategies and means of action of the civil society are steadily expanding, the lack of endogenous sources of financing and the ever-increasing barriers to their access in a context of global economic crisis and fight against terrorism remain significant obstacles to their development. As a result, defenders are either forced to stop their activities, to dissolve the associations for which they work or have no other choice than to continue their activities in defiance of the arbitrary measures imposed upon them.

Several States, including Egypt, Algeria and Syria, have developed a legal and administrative arsenal of sophisticated measures aimed at directly interfering with the functioning of civil society organisations and excessive control over the actions carried out by human rights defenders by cutting them off from funding, either wholly or partly. As a result, defenders are subject to legislative restrictions, complex or lengthy registration procedures, the absence of responses from the administration and to obstacles to opening bank accounts. These restrictions are often accompanied by criminal prosecutions, prison sentences, freezing of bank accounts and smear campaigns carried out by the government-influenced media outlets with the aim of likening defenders to "agents" manipulated by foreign entities. Such threats are mainly used as a pretext to silence non-governmental organisations working to promote and protect civil and political rights, and they violate the States' obligations to respect the right to freedom of association, as stated in the conventions to which the latter are parties.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, internal funding made available to actors dedicated to defending civil and political rights is poor -or non-existent- in most countries of the region including the ones where civil society organisations enjoy a relative degree of autonomy and freedom of action.<sup>2</sup> Although efforts have been made to develop self-funding strategies, legislations that encourage the creation of foundations and promote corporate social responsibility, they mainly concern charities and cannot match the needs of a growing civil society movement whose actions are carried out at the local level.

The Foundation has therefore focused its strategy on the fundamental right to freedom of association, including access to funding, in order to consolidate the region's human rights movement by compensating for the lack of endogenous resources and the many obstacles with which human rights associations are faced. In addition, it has decided to concentrate its efforts to outline the means and the ways of mobilising, strengthening and diversifying existing resources within Arab societies in order to perpetuate the activities of actors involved in the promotion and protection of human rights more sustainable. This focus has materialised in a few examples shown below:

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<sup>1</sup> Violations of the right of NGOs to funding: from harassment to criminalisation, OBS Annual Report 2013, <http://www.fidh.org/en/human-rights-defenders/Annual-Reports/obs-annual-report-2013-violations-of-the-right-of-ngos-to-funding-from-12892>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

*In **Palestine**, a local association has developed a program for the protection of threatened civil society organisations. In a context of political repression exerted on civil society actors and activities by the Hamas in Gaza and by the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, this program consists of legal aid, networking, documentation, advocacy and mobilisation aimed at countering proven violations and ensuring respect for the right to freedom of association.*

*Although opportunities for obtaining funding from foreign sources have developed in **Tunisia** over the past three years, they are often limited to projects and do not cover basic expenses such as rent, equipment or personnel, all of which are crucial to strengthening outreach, professionalization and the sustainability of civil society activities. The Foundation therefore covered the operating expenses of nineteen new associations whose work is carried out mainly in remote areas of the country, in order to ensure widespread vigilance and mobilisation with regard to the respect of human rights.*

**1.3.** Finally, beyond the considerable efforts and means deployed by civil society actors to monitor and prevent violent, authoritarian or retrograde drifts and to ensure a transition towards democracy, the democratisation potential of Arab civil societies remains hindered by contradictory political or identity-based narratives and antagonistic society-building projects. The fall of authoritarian regimes has revealed a fragmented political landscape framed by social divides onto which a large number of civil society initiatives have grafted.

Although generally positive, these social dynamics have also proved unstructured - due to the lack of experience of the various actors involved - to take advantage of the **collaboration and dialogue opportunities** that could be taken from the situation to create a common language of "democratic cohabitation."<sup>3</sup>

The new context requires the challenge to peacefully strive for expanded spaces for a cohabitation pattern which will be shared by the largest majority of citizens, particularly in countries where dictatorial regimes came to an end.<sup>4</sup> However, for it to be successful, such a model would need to be inclusive and collaborative with the aim of guaranteeing the conditions that are crucial for ensuring human dignity. Arab civil societies now face the challenge of maintaining their momentum while transforming their actions into building new organisational and unifying arrangements.

In the countries of the region where uncertainties remain despite progress in terms of democratisation, namely Morocco and Tunisia, the Foundation focused its strategy on the consolidation of the movement in order to strengthen collective dialogue and advocacy efforts aimed at reconstruction and transformation in various areas such as equality, pluralism and diversity.

Consolidating its presence at the regional level enabled the Foundation to strengthen this approach in order to ensure the convergence of civil society actors' intervention strategies and improve their effectiveness, as evidenced by the following examples:

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<sup>3</sup> Mohamed Sghir Janjar, "Arab Revolutions" facing the challenges of democratic cohabitation, EMHRF, 11 May 2013: [http://www.emhrf.org/en/documents/FinalContributionJanjar\\_BMParisMay2013\\_eng.pdf](http://www.emhrf.org/en/documents/FinalContributionJanjar_BMParisMay2013_eng.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

*In **Tunisia**, around twenty new civil society actors supported by the Foundation rallied with four major Tunisian civil society organisations and successfully led the national dialogue and the adoption of the new Constitution. These new partners, along with over 300 organisations, took part in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Civil Society Platform held under the slogan "Let's mobilise for the elections" to debate proposals for guiding the electoral process, the establishment of various agencies responsible for ensuring the proper conduct of the elections, the independence and the neutrality of their candidates, as well as the transparency of the latter's operations. The proposals put forward following the discussions were presented to the general public, to the political parties, to the government and the National Constituent Assembly.*

*The Foundation supported the implementation of **a multi-faceted project carried out by four Israeli and Palestinian NGOs** with the aim of countering and overcoming the direct consequences of the Praver-Begin Plan on the highly marginalised and vulnerable Bedouin population. The project involved complementary actions, including monitoring human rights violations and the publication of reports, empowerment and assistance to anti-Praver militants as well as awareness-raising work among the Israeli media and the general population with regard to the Plan and its consequences. These concerted efforts carried out by the Israeli and Palestinian human rights NGOs in Israel, in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) and at the international level led to the Praver-Begin Plan being halted in January 2014.*

In total, the Foundation provided assistance to ninety human rights defenders, whether acting individually or collectively, in order to prevent democratic backsliding and to promote the implementation of actual and lasting democratic reforms in the region in 2013.

## **2. Executive Summary**

Several indicators and activities characterise the Foundation's approach to the developments that have marked the year 2013.

**2.1. The number of applications the Foundation has received and processed has increased by 182%** compared to the previous year. This increase can be explained by the spiral of violence and the repressive policies that have been adopted in a number of countries, as well as the increase of threats against dissident opinions and human rights defenders. The majority of the applications come from Syria, Tunisia, Egypt, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, representing 66% of the total number of applications in 2013.

**2.2.** The Foundation continued to provide special support to **individual human rights defenders in danger** in repressive and violent environments, by funding their basic needs, as well as **emerging civil society groups** and established **NGOs in order to advance professionalization and cohesion of their actions**. The **basic needs in terms of protection** and the **core expenses of NGOs** represented 74% of the expenses covered by the Foundation in 2013. These interventions took place in areas where major donors often limit their funding opportunities to projects and/or do not have the necessary mechanisms for transferring funds quickly and in a creative manner in repressive contexts, nor the means to provide a large number of small grants to individuals.

**2.3.** The human rights situation in **Syria** has remained a central concern for the Foundation. The interventions have been focused on protecting human rights defenders, defending prisoners of conscience and documenting repression by all parties involved in the conflict, focusing on complementary and specialised approaches aimed at ensuring access to reliable sources of information and accountability in the future. The Foundation's interventions in Syria represented 47% of all its interventions in 2013.

**2.4.** In **Tunisia** and **Libya**, priority was given to providing support to the activities of emerging civil society organisation located in remote areas in order to promote constant mobilisation in support of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. In Tunisia, consolidating the Foundation's regional presence has helped to strengthen its role as an interface with local, national and international actors, including donors, in order to foster convergence of their respective initiatives. In 2013, the Foundation carried out 22% of its interventions in Tunisia, of which 82% targeted remote areas. In Libya, the Foundation consolidated its first actions undertaken last year by providing support to emerging initiatives in the areas of citizenship, empowerment of women and respect of migrants' and refugees' rights. Given the many needs expressed by the Libyan actors - needs which go well beyond financial considerations - the Foundation also promoted exchanges and consultations with these actors, both among themselves and with their Tunisian civil society counterparts.

**2.5.** In light of the deteriorating situation in **Egypt**, the Foundation expanded its work within the country during 2013. A number of its interventions focused on the protection of defenders and the consolidation of their efforts in documenting human rights violations, given the lack of independent investigations and accountability for the large-scale violations committed. The Foundation's interventions in Egypt represented 9% of all its interventions in 2013, and they are expected to substantially increase in the future.

**2.6.** In 2013, the Foundation attached particular importance to the **fight against impunity** and the promotion of national efforts towards the **adoption and implementation of reforms in the areas of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights**. The percentage of interventions on these issues increased to 46% in 2013.

**2.7.** The Foundation also carried out interventions focussed on **freedom of expression and the right to access information**, representing 18% of the interventions. In particular, the Foundation encouraged new approaches, such as **cultural and artistic activities**, as an alternative to conventional means aimed at reaching a younger audience in the region. Street theatre, music and folk arts are but a few examples of innovative approaches adopted by an increasing number of local partners in order to build the new language of freedom and to disseminate the values of democracy, citizenship, justice and human rights. These activities represented 10% of all activities carried out by those who received support from the Foundation in 2013.

**2.8.** In addition to financial support, the Foundation continued to give priority to **strengthening its cooperation and partnership relations** at national, regional and international levels, with international NGOs and financial partners, particularly with regard to the **security and well-being of human rights defenders in unstable and repressive political contexts**. Closer collaboration with these partners is essential in order to strengthen the exchange of information, discussing and coordinating strategies aimed at providing effective long-term support to human rights defenders.

**2.9.** The last **external evaluation** conducted in June 2013 confirmed the relevance and effectiveness of support actions carried out by the Foundation: "*The political changes that occurred in the Southern Mediterranean countries has shown that a very small Foundation, such as EMHRF, is very capable of responding quickly to*



*changing political situation. The Foundation is able to respond rapidly to financial needs which may arise for human rights defenders and it is able to accompany emerging human rights defenders and their organisations in their aim to mobilise international support, seek funding from mainstream donors and make alliances with local NGOs who have similar goals and aims".*

**2.10.** As a result of these developments, the ***Foundation's role in support of human rights defenders has continued to grow*** and its annual budget increased by 15%. Direct interventions in support of human rights defenders represented 70% of the Foundation's overall budget while administrative and personnel costs were maintained at 21%.

The actions undertaken by the Foundation over the course of 2013 reflect the above-mentioned orientations. These orientations were realised through actions that revolve around the two components presented in this activity report, namely ***direct*** and ***indirect*** support provided to human rights defenders.

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

The Foundation undertook 87 interventions aimed at supporting 90 human rights defenders (56 NGOs or groups and 34 individual defenders) who foster, support, protect and monitor respect for human rights in the South-Mediterranean region.<sup>5</sup>

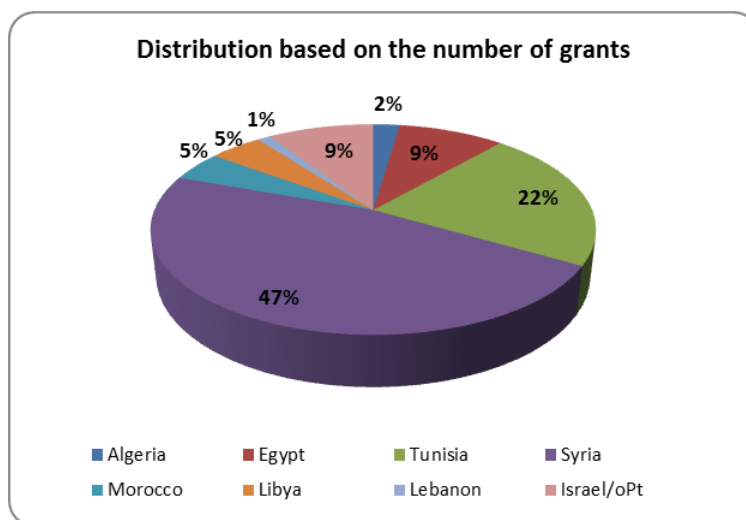
The total amount involved of the grants to these defenders was over 1.2 million euros.<sup>6</sup>

The next chart shows the overall percentage distribution of grants per country, with Syria and Tunisia remaining at the core of the Foundation's interventions in 2013:

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<sup>5</sup> The Foundation received 405 funding proposals and inquiries from human rights defenders during the year 2013, which represents an increase of 182% compared with the previous year. The majority of the applications received came from Syria, Tunisia, Egypt, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, which accounted for 66 percent of all applications in 2013. Following a thorough due diligence process and in compliance with the principal selection criteria which can be consulted on the Foundation's website, the Board granted urgent and flexible support to 21 percent of applicants. The majority of the requests came from defenders, who had heard of the Foundation by word of mouth (from other defenders or partners), through field visits, from members of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) or on the Foundation's website. Among the beneficiaries of the Foundation's assistance, 4 percent were EMHRN members.

<sup>6</sup> The precise amount was € 1, 265,843.59.

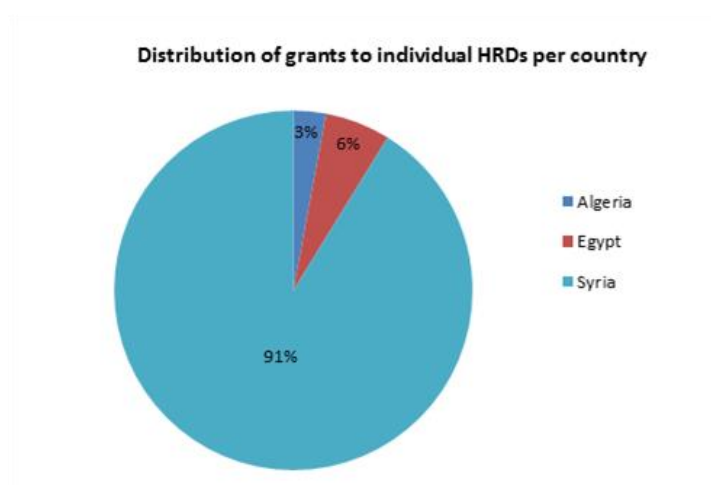


The support provided to defenders in the region can be divided into two broad categories, as set out below.<sup>7</sup>

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

In 2013, the Foundation granted **urgent support** to 34 individual defenders facing difficulties or at risk as a result of their actions in support of democratisation and respect for human rights in the South-Mediterranean region.

As indicated in the chart below, the vast majority of these interventions were focused on the consequences of the escalation of the conflict for Syrian human rights defenders.



<sup>7</sup> Two mechanisms have been established by the Foundation to provide flexible responses to the needs expressed by human rights defenders: an urgent-response mechanism, allowing the Board to make a decision on an application in the amount of € 5,000 (with a maximum 20 % overhead, i.e. € 6,000) within a maximum of 10 days, and a regular consultation mechanism employed at annual meetings of the Board, during which proposals amounting up to € 40,000 each are discussed.

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

- Three defenders in Syria and Egypt, whose lives were under threat as a result of serious health problems, were given assistance so they could seek **medical treatments and rehabilitation services** abroad. The decisions to grant support were based on such factors as severe violations of the defenders' rights and their inability to afford the costs involved because of their on-going struggle in favour of human rights.
- Thirteen Syrian defenders, one Egyptian defender and one Algerian defender facing constant harassment or arbitrary detention because of their position in favour of human rights received support to meet their basic needs in order to **relocate to safe places and/or protect their safety**, thus, enabling them to overcome their plight and pursue their human rights work.
- Sixteen Syrian defenders and their families, who fled the country because their lives were threatened as a result of their work and faced grave economic difficulties, received support to **temporarily relocate abroad** and to allow them to continue their work.

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

- The Foundation coordinated its urgent interventions in support of one Egyptian and fourteen Syrian defenders with several regional and international organisations, including the members of a core group of regional and international human rights NGOs active on Syria, as part of their solidarity actions (campaigns, urgent appeals, press releases, trial-monitoring missions, meetings with officials and letters supporting asylum requests, etc.).
- The Foundation ensured that eleven Syrian defenders would benefit from educational opportunities and trainings as well as possibilities of long-term support related to their field of work from national, regional and international actors, thus ensuring - at least in part - the sustainability of their work and personal situation in exile.
- The Foundation coordinated two of its urgent interventions in support of Syrian human rights defenders, victims of recurrent direct threats, ill-treatment and torture, with a rehabilitation centre in the region to ensure that they would receive appropriate medical and psychosocial support.
- The Foundation was instrumental in arranging for two international partners to bear the additional costs associated with the basic expenses of three Syrian defenders facing highly precarious situation. In these cases, the Foundation acted as an intermediary.

In general, the outcome of the Foundation's emergency interventions was encouraging:<sup>8</sup>

- Five human rights defenders were able to receive crucial medical treatment and rehabilitation services in timely fashion. Four of them have been able to resume their work due to improvements in their psychological and physical conditions. One defender will however require longer term treatment before being able to resume his work.

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<sup>8</sup> All human rights defenders and NGOs acknowledged receipt of the funds in a timely manner. The urgent financial assistance provided by the Foundation did not increase security threats to the recipients, thanks to the confidentiality rules applied prior, during and after the transfer of the funds.

- The urgent support provided by the Foundation also enabled twenty-four human rights defenders to avoid threats against their lives and a decline in their safety. Seven of them obtained asylum and resettlement opportunities in Europe thanks to the collaborative work undertaken by the Foundation and the members of the core group of international NGOs active on Syria. Moreover, the majority of them were able to secure the means to pursue their work in protecting and promoting respect for human rights, either in their own countries or from neighbouring countries. In particular, two defenders have developed innovative media projects, which received international awards and sustainable support during the year.
- By the end of 2013, one defender has been abducted and his fate remains unknown. In addition, four of the defenders supported remained in detention and had not been able to resume their work. The Foundation may thus renew its support to their families in 2014.
- Last but not least, important needs remain in the field of lasting educational opportunities for Syrian human rights defenders, in particular in the areas of human rights, languages and management in order to consolidate their roles and actions over the long term.

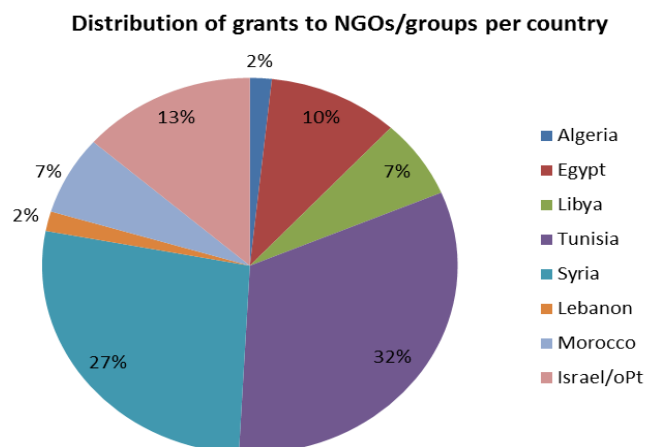
### **3.2. Flexible interventions in support of emerging NGOs and sensitive projects in the regional context**

With a view to adapting to the different situations and dynamics at work in the region, the Foundation also allocated **flexible support**, *both on an urgent and on a regular basis*, to 56 human rights groups and NGOs that faced difficulties in securing funding or fell outside mainstream donors' categories.

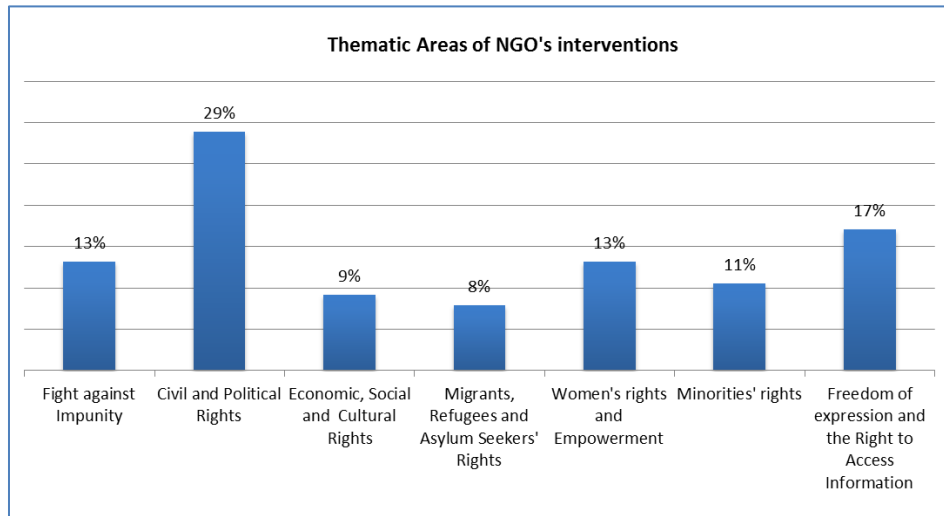
These interventions focused on the following situations:

- Leveraging and sustaining 28 emerging human rights groups in the face of rapidly changing developments;
- Reinforcing the capacities of 28 established human rights NGOs by enabling them to boost their professionalization and sustain their work.

Note that 59 % of all flexible interventions in 2013 targeted remote areas in the countries appearing in the chart below:



The following issues were given special consideration during the year 2013:



The Foundation sought to respond to specific needs expressed by civil society actors in contexts where events moved quickly and national dynamics were different from one country to another. To simplify the presentation of the Foundation's activity, five contexts of intervention are described below.

### 3.2.1. Protracted War in Syria

Against the backdrop of the complex and multifaceted Syrian war where the power paradigms are often fragile and shifting in accordance to regional interferences and the nature of the ruling entity, the role of independent civil society and human rights organisations has changed and gained flexibility in order to meet the most basic needs of the civilian population in the country or in neighbouring countries.

The Foundation thus gave priority to reinforcing the efforts carried out by emerging Syrian civil society organisations to document human rights abuses and to prevent further deterioration of the human rights situation as well as displaying elements of pluralism and mitigating sectarian polarisation. In particular, the Foundation's interventions sought to support fourteen human rights initiatives focused on the following specific objectives:

- **Reinforcing the monitoring and documentation of human rights violations by all parts in the conflict**, by six human rights associations and groups that have complementary and specialised approaches in order to secure access to reliable information. In particular, the specific goals of these NGOs were to cover monitoring gaps related specifically to violations of the rights of internal and borders Syrian refugee families, journalists, minorities, women and children. The ultimate goal was to raise awareness and initiate collective actions for the victims targeting the local civil society, the media and the international community.
- **Providing legal aid and representation to prisoners of conscience and victims of the repression** appearing before domestic tribunals in Syria by two groups. In particular, these services were aimed at

Syrian peaceful pro-democracy activists and human rights defenders who were arbitrarily referred to the Anti-Terrorism Court in Damascus.

- ***Reinforcing human rights culture and raising awareness about citizenship and cultural diversity*** by producing pedagogical tools and organising dialogues sessions by three associations primarily targeting youth and vulnerable segments of the population.
- ***Responding to the growing influx of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries***, by monitoring and advising them as well as advocating for their legal protection, especially women victims of violence, by three Syrian civil society initiatives.

### 3.2.2. Volatile Transition Contexts in Tunisia and Libya

Against a background of unstable political conditions associated with increasing acts of violence and the lack of institutions guaranteeing the exercise of basic rights and freedoms in Libya, the Foundation's interventions targeted four initiatives aimed at averting further human rights abuses.

In Tunisia, where progress has been made but uncertainty remains, the Foundation has focused its strategy on supporting nineteen initiatives to strengthen vigilance, dialogue and advocacy efforts of the civil society movement in order to fend off the possibility of democratic setbacks.

In these two countries, activities aimed at bolstering constitutional and legislative reforms in the field of human rights were a central concern of the Foundation's interventions.

- ***Raising awareness for respect of human rights at the grassroots level*** through training, networking, artistic and cultural activities directed at civil society actors and the public at large, by fourteen NGOs. In particular, the areas of NGO intervention dealt with the fight against political violence, the promotion of citizenship, women's rights, freedom of expression and the right to access information.
- ***Strengthening the advocacy efforts*** of eight NGOs aimed at ***promoting constitutional and legislative reforms*** in the field of human rights at the national level, in particular in the areas of civil and political rights, women's rights and gender equality, economic and social rights, transitional justice and the independence of the judiciary as well as migrants' and refugees' rights. In four cases, the NGOs documented human rights violations with the goal of possibly launching formal proceedings or filing legal complaints. In most cases, these new actors submitted proposals and recommendations for constitutional and legislative reforms.
- ***Providing shelter and support*** to vulnerable women, victims of gender discriminations in combination with, and reinforced by, economic and social discriminations. The goal was to provide them with temporary accommodation, social and psychological support, guidance through the legal and administrative maze, and guidance in achieving economic and social rights.

### 3.2.3. Restrictive Environment for Independent Civil Society in Egypt and Algeria

In Egypt, the Foundation has monitored a significant deterioration of the human rights situation, arbitrary legislative developments and increasing threats facing dissenting voices, including journalists, pro-democracy

activists and human rights defenders in the course of 2013. Defenders and NGOs have increasingly been the target of arbitrary physical, judicial and defaming attacks at a time when there is persistent impunity for grave human rights violations. In view of the reoccurring and cumulative patterns of violations, the Foundation reinforced its interventions aimed at protecting defenders and reinforcing their documentation efforts of human rights abuses.

In Algeria, where political reforms perversely continued to create obstacles to restrict the activities of civil society, the Foundation's interventions aimed at increasing and consolidating the operating and communication skills of civil society actors.

In particular, the Foundation's interventions sought to support seven civil society initiatives focused on the following specific objectives:

- ***Reinforcing the monitoring and documentation efforts*** carried out by three Egyptian organisations on unceasing episodes of violent clashes which resulted in the death of hundreds of civilians, including political violence, armed intra-tribal violence, violence against women and minorities as well as refugees and migrants. Two of these NGOs are based in the unstable and marginalised areas of Suez and East of Delta as well as Sinai Peninsula and the reports produced built up on and complemented the work conducted by international human rights organisations.
- ***Strengthening advocacy efforts*** of two Egyptian organisations aimed at ***promoting constitutional reforms*** in the field of human rights at the national level, in particular in the areas of women's rights and gender equality, and minorities' rights. These actors submitted proposals and recommendations to the Constitutional Committee in Egypt.
- ***Raising awareness of human rights concepts and spreading the culture of tolerance*** through defying cultural, racial, sexual, political and religious intolerance amidst marginalized youth, especially within the highly contested fields of women's rights and freedom of religion. In particular, an emerging civil society group employed street theater and popular arts to raise youth awareness in isolated and highly impoverished areas.
- ***Increasing and consolidating the operating and communication skills*** of Algerian civil society actors, in particular in the fields of journalistic writings, producing a newspaper or a web bulletin and management of projects with the aim of boosting their visibility and reinforcing their role towards the population.

#### **3.2.4. Threats facing Civil Society in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**

Civil society in Israel and Palestine witnessed a number of setbacks in the past period. Civil society actors operating in Israel have voiced concerns with regards to securing funds for activities related to the defence of migrants and refugees' rights as well as Palestinian rights, especially those of the Palestinian Bedouins, due to increasingly vitriolic government rhetoric and legal conduct. The recent Prager-Begin Bill, which was adopted by the Israeli government in May 2013 and pending approval before the Knesset is an illustration of such legal conduct.

At the same time, in the West Bank and Gaza, politically-driven crackdown on civil society actors and activities also continued by the Palestinian Authority and Hamas's security apparatus. The persistence of the situation

and the position of many mainstream donors to continue the status quo have led to a severe polarisation within Palestinian NGOs – a situation that negatively affects the overall Palestinian civil society culture and hinders the process of protecting and promoting respect for human rights.

The Foundation's interventions in support of eight NGOs thus aimed at addressing these challenges:

- ***Responding to alarming legislative developments*** by implementing an urgent multi-faceted project between four established Israeli and Palestinian NGOs aimed at stopping and circumventing the most direct ramifications of the Praver-Begin plan on the highly marginalised and fragile Bedouin population. In particular, this project tackled complementary actions, including monitoring and publishing reports in relation to human rights abuses, empowering and providing anti-Praver plan activists with assistance as well as raising awareness of the plan and its consequences to the Israeli media and to the public at large.
- ***Promoting respect for refugees and migrants rights*** by reducing the awareness gap on the situation of asylum seekers, exposing the effects of governmental policies towards immigrants and countering the negative stereotypes and tainted views prevalent in mainstream media sources.
- ***Protecting the right to freedom of association and consolidating the role of civil society in the occupied Palestinian territories*** by increasing the responsiveness of human rights organisations to infringements on the right to freedom of association, consolidating advocacy activities from NGOs on the executive branches to respect international agreements as well as reinforcing the levels of cooperation between NGOs facing threats in Gaza and the West Bank.
- ***Providing bridging support to civil society groups affected by politically conditioned agendas in the Gaza Strip*** with the aim of sustaining their human rights activities towards impoverished and vulnerable groups, especially the access to justice for women, juveniles and visually impaired groups.

### 3.2.5. Challenges facing Civil Society in Morocco and Lebanon

In Morocco and Lebanon, where civil society organisations enjoy relative autonomy and operational freedom, the Foundation's interventions were mainly aimed at consolidating the activities, and boosting the visibility and professionalization of five NGOs that have faced difficulties in securing funding because of the sensitive nature of their work or because mainstream donors have refocused their strategies on countries of the region experiencing drastic changes.

The Foundation's interventions thus focused on the following situations:

- ***Offering legal assistance to refugees and migrants in Morocco*** given the repression and appalling conditions in which most migrants live in the country, the lack of information and legal services aimed at realising their rights.
- ***Organising an annual strategy meeting for NGOs' representatives*** dealing with the fight against enforced disappearances in Lebanon and in the region, in order to assist them in jointly refining their strategies, notably on documentation and advocacy at the national, regional and international levels over the coming three years.



- ***Enlarging the area of influence of local civil society organisations in Morocco***, through three NGO initiatives that provide independent frameworks for reflection and studies on democracy and human rights issues. In particular, these initiatives aimed at reinforcing efforts carried out at the local level to assess human rights policies in the Sahara region, to advance knowledge-sharing on such key issues as transitional justice and the security sector reform, and to develop local NGOs' internal and external communication strategies.

### **3.2.6. Follow up on and Results of Flexible Interventions**

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

- provided encouragement and assistance to all 28 emerging groups and NGOs, especially those located in Syria, in Tunisia, in Libya and in Egypt, in developing strategic action plans and proposals with the aim of enabling the Foundation, in consultation with other partners, to respond strategically to the needs of these newly formed groups and NGOs;
- provided coaching to all new partners, especially the ones working in the remote areas of Tunisia, by offering strategic advice related to the nature of their work and to the democratic management of an association, in connection with the regional office of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN);
- encouraged 44 NGOs to establish or maintain contacts with other groups and institutions working in the same thematic areas at the local, national and regional levels. The purpose of these contacts was to enable these NGOs to share information and experiences, to identify potentials for synergies and coordinated activities, and as a corollary to benefit from non-financial support that contributes to the impact and sustainability of their activities;
- coordinated its interventions and participated in consultations with Algerian civil society organisations, organised by the EMHRN in order to discuss challenges facing Algerian human rights NGOs and explore entry-points and gaps for building up and consolidating their capacities in the long-term;
- coordinated its interventions and participated in consultations aimed at reinforcing documentation efforts on human rights violations in the Syrian context, organised by the EMHRN in connection with Syrian civil society organisations and other regional and international organisations active in this field, including inter-governmental organisations and few donors. In particular, these consultations aimed at discussing and presenting an assessment of the challenges facing Syrian human rights organisations in working on documentation with a view to refine opportunities and priorities as well as exploring ways to respond jointly and strategically to these needs;
- took part in a donors' consultative meeting focussing on the issue of supporting human rights work in the Syrian conflict in order to exchange information and strategies related to the donors' interventions. Greater cooperation with these partners was conducive to avoid duplication of efforts, to reinforce exchanges of information and to discuss and coordinate strategies that can effectively support Syrian civil society over the long term;
- recommended - in collaboration with the EMHRN - emerging human rights NGOs from Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Algeria and Syria to attend a civil society consultation, organised by the Civil Society Facility South, a regional program funded by the European Union, in November 2013. This was an important occasion for local partners facing important difficulties to secure funding from mainstream donors to

address their needs and concerns in the areas of EU financing, participation in capacity building activities and their inclusion in consultative and policy dialogue;

- facilitated exchange of contacts, acted as intermediary, forwarded a list of potential donors and/or helped in the submission of funding requests for 16 NGOs.

It is difficult to measure the long-term results of the support provided to these groups and NGOs, not only because most of the partnerships are still on-going but also because political will — from both inside and outside the region — is often a precondition to achieving long-term results. Nonetheless, some of the main achievements that resulted out of the Foundation's collaboration with its partners can be highlighted:

- All 28 emerging groups and NGOs were able to sustain their activities, thanks to seed funding and regular coaching provided by the Foundation. In Tunisia, 19 of these partners have not only become important contacts for the authorities and other actors in their fields of expertise, but they have also succeeded in creating awareness and consolidating the human rights movement. Led by four major Tunisian civil society organisations, the movement's activities resulted in the completion of the national political dialogue and the adoption of the Constitution.
- These new partners took part, along with many others, in the second major civil-society platform that was held in Tunisia under the title "*Remaining Mobilised for the Elections*", on 25-28 December 2013. The event was attended by approximately 850 participants representing more than 300 organisations who debated proposals related to following up on the electoral process, including the installation of the various bodies responsible for ensuring the proper conduct of the elections, the independence and neutrality of the candidates in these instances, as well as their transparent functioning.<sup>9</sup>
- In Syria, pro bono legal assistance and representation was provided to 258 pro-democracy activists and human rights defenders as well as their relatives who had been arbitrarily arrested and brought before domestic courts because of their views and roles on respect for democracy and human rights. Moreover, thirty activists, NGO members, took part in trainings on documentation of human rights violations, led by regional partners of the EMHRF. Last but not least, two new civil society initiatives were established to provide assistance and counselling to Syrian refugees, including Syrian-Palestinians, in Lebanon and in Turkey. The services include - among others - interactive maps and information materials for relief and legal aid as well as tailored sessions and trainings for victims of gender-based violence and trafficking.
- In Egypt, comprehensive reports were produced by two NGOs investigating the violent events which took place in Port Said and Sinai during the period January-August 2013, resulting in the death of hundreds and injury of thousands. In particular, these reports document and map cases of killing against civilians, police members and gun men. The reports provide a number of recommendations, including further investigating and holding accountable those responsible for human rights violations as well as respecting and adhering - by all parties including the Egyptian authorities and the security forces - to universally-recognised human rights standards. Moreover, a number of recommendations regarding women and handicapped persons' rights - produced by two other Egyptian NGO beneficiaries - were included by the Constitutional Committee in the newly-adopted Constitution.
- Concerted efforts and civil-resistance campaigns carried out by Israeli and Palestinian human rights NGOs in Israel, the occupied Palestinian territories and at the international level resulted in the halting of the Prager-Begin plan in January 2014. However, it remains unclear whether the plan was shelved or temporarily postponed, and the situation of the Bedouin population remains stark. Moreover, an

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<sup>9</sup> Final declaration available in French at the following [link](#).

innovative media project carried out by a NGO beneficiary reinforced the work of several human rights NGOs to shed light on the situation and to promote respect for the rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Israel.

- Twelve NGOs, facing a shift in donors' priorities and/or serious difficulties in securing support for their core activities, received bridging support. This enabled them to retain staff members, a prerequisite to sustaining their leadership and ensuring the consolidation of the civil society movement.
- Thanks to the Foundation's closer cooperation with international partners, several of its beneficiaries, both individuals and associations, were able to benefit from capacity-building trainings and are cooperating with the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN), the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, the Open Society Foundations, the Sigrid Rausing Trust, Oxfam Novib, the European Endowment for Democracy (EED), the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED), Mama Cash, Hivos - Humanist Institute for Cooperation, the Arab Human Rights Fund, the Comité Catholique contre la Faim et pour le Développement (CCFD), the Fund for Global Human Rights, the Arab Institute for Human Rights (AIHR), the Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR), the International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), the Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Canal France International, International Media Support (IMS) as well as foreign representations and the delegations of the European Union, among others.
- 25 % of NGO beneficiaries were able to obtain complementary and additional financing from other institutions, thus ensuring, at least in part, the sustainability of their activities.

Despite these positive results, the Libyan and Syrian civil society partners have experienced significant difficulties and delays in the implementation of their activities due to the instability of the political and security situation in these countries.

Furthermore, while many Egyptian human rights NGOs have resorted to silence as a strategic choice to avert a severe backlash from the Egyptian authorities, one NGO recipient refrained from publishing tangible reporting on major human rights violations favouring political stances over the universality of human rights principles.

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

Beyond providing financial assistance, the Foundation took other steps to support human rights defenders — mainly by strengthening its presence at the local level and by meeting with regional and international funders involved in the promotion of democracy and the protection of human rights.

The purpose of these activities was to assess the developments occurring in the region, measure the impact of the assistance provided and, where appropriate, consider additional support. They also resulted in strengthened partnerships with key actors whose focus is on supporting human rights defenders over the long term.

Two activities were devoted to achieving this goal in 2013, as set out below.

##### **4.1. Strengthened presence in the Maghreb and Mashrek regions**

The Foundation increased its activities in the Maghreb and Mashrek regions through its physical presence in Tunisia and regular visits to Libya, Egypt and Syria's neighbouring countries in order to adapt more quickly to changing circumstances and the needs of local defenders in the course of 2013.

##### **4.1.1. Maghreb: Reinforced Presence in Tunisia and Renewed Visits to Libya**

The Maghreb mission of the Foundation, located in Tunisia, organised a number of field visits to Tunisian remote cities of Thala, Kasserine, Sidi Bouzid, Tataouine, Siliana, Le Kef, Djerba, Sfax and the Southern mining area in the course of 2013. On these occasions, it met with the Foundation's local partners in order to follow-up closely on the developments of their actions, advise them on possible collaborations, the definition of projects and the democratic management of a NGO. It also met with applicants to assess their needs, their performances, the relevance of their actions and clarify their proposals. As a result of these regular visits, twelve emerging NGOs, located in neglected areas, received both direct support and coaching services aimed at leveraging and strengthening their actions on the promotion of citizenship, freedom of expression, women's rights, minorities' rights and economic, social and cultural rights.

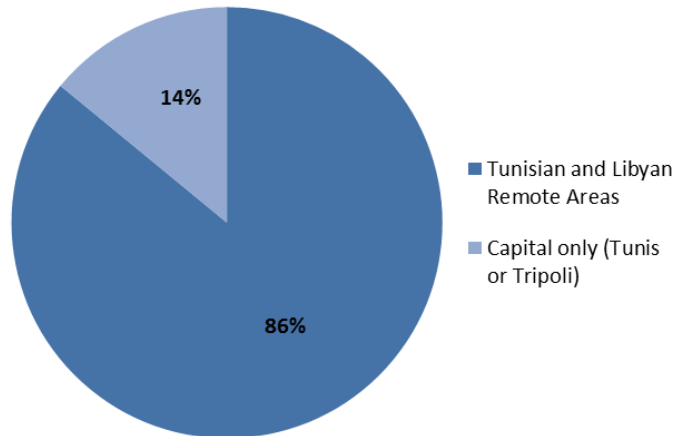
Moreover, the Maghreb mission conducted two field visits to Libya on 5-9 April and 9-11 September 2013. The objective was to deepen the understanding of the various dynamics of the Libyan civil society, to listen to the various emerging NGOs and to refine the required mechanisms and means to guide them through their development. As a result of these visits, the Foundation's mission enjoyed more visibility within the Libyan civil society and the different national and international actors. Three emerging and promising NGOs have been able to receive both direct and indirect support to leverage and strengthen their innovative actions aimed at promoting respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, especially women rights,<sup>10</sup> migrants and refugees' rights as well as minorities' rights.

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<sup>10</sup> In particular, women rights activists have been campaigning for the Constitutional Drafting Commission electoral law to provide 15 seats for women in order to ensure that Libyan women's needs, rights and aspirations are recognized and protected within Libya's new Constitution. However, this was

The results of this reinforced local presence and the regular visits can be considered particularly positive. The Tunisian and Libyan civil society groups that received seed support were influential in all the governorates of the countries, even though some of them were physically present only in Tunis or in Tripoli, as shown in the chart below:

**Physical Presence of Tunisian and Libyan Local Partners**



In fact, a qualitative approach focused on the local level is needed to understand the different dynamics at play and support emerging initiatives. While the civil society has long been side-lined, or non-existent in the case of Libya, they are now at the centre of the political, economic, social and cultural activity and swiftly evolving in the countries. Most of these NGOs, however, have neither a clear vision nor the contacts or the experience needed to ensure the sustainability of their action. Therefore, there is a need to be proactive in keeping regular contacts with a wide-range of defenders in different regions and monitor closely their development. Small amounts of money to cover rental fees, the purchase of material and the recruitment of staff are essential and can significantly contribute to boosting their capacities to launch, adapt and continue their valuable work in promoting and defending human rights at this challenging yet crucial time.

#### **4.1.2. Mashrek: Renewed Field Visits to Egypt and Syria's Neighbouring Countries**

Although the Foundation hasn't established a physical presence in the Mashrek region because of worsening security conditions, field visits took place to Egypt and Syria's neighbouring countries in the course of February and December 2013. The growing presence of Syrian refugees in these countries, among which one can find a number of Syrian pro-democracy and civil society actors facing appalling conditions and threats, prompted the need for these repeated visits. In the face of rapidly changing developments in these countries, the Foundation has also decided to reinforce its operational team by recruiting a qualified consultant at the end of 2013.

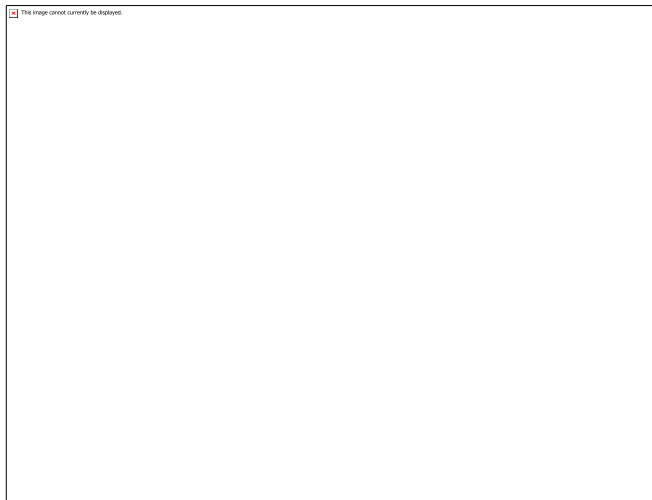
The Mashrek mission met with about sixty individual activists and civil society groups and it attended two consultative donors' meetings in Egypt, Lebanon and Turkey on 19-25 February and 16-22 December 2013. The

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rejected by the GNC and the final draft included only 10% of seats for women, or 6 seats out of 60. The NGOs supported by the Foundation are thus working on ensuring that the constitutional process engage the public and create dialogue on these sensitive and controversial issues to be addressed.

objective of these meetings was to deepen the understanding of new dynamics of the civil society and human rights NGOs in these countries and to refine the required priorities, mechanisms and means to protect and support the latter in a swift and effective manner. As a result of these visits, ten individual defenders facing important threats against their lives received urgent support in order to meet their basic needs and protect their safety. Moreover, four emerging civil society initiatives received seed support to conduct activities aimed at providing assistance and bolstering the human rights rhetoric amidst Syrian vulnerable refugee' population. Last but not least, the Foundation engaged in a constructive discussion with like-minded donors to identify pressing concerns related to human rights defenders' needs and flexible response tools that take into consideration the cultural sensitivity aspects and the volatile socio-political environment of the region.

These visits were thus essential to remain attuned to the shifting developments affecting human rights defenders and NGOs in Egypt and in Syria, and to respond to their needs in a rapid and tangible manner, as shown in the chart below:



The results of these regular visits can be considered encouraging. A number of defenders and NGOs have received rapid support not only to protect their safety but also to develop timely initiatives responding to the developments on-the-ground.

#### **4.2. Reinforced cooperation with networks of regional and international foundations**

As part of its activities aimed at strengthening cooperation in ensuring long-term and sustainable support to human rights defenders, the Foundation took an active part in meetings with regional and international foundations involved in human rights issues. In particular, the Foundation was an active participant in meetings of the International Human Rights Funders Group<sup>11</sup> in 2013. The main purpose of the Foundation's membership and participation in this network was to discuss developments occurring in the region and how these affect local human rights actors, as well as the role that the donor community could play in supporting these actors in an environment where high hopes coexist with instability and an uncertain outlook for the future.

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<sup>11</sup> The International Human Rights Funders Group (IHRFG) is a network of international foundations which currently has more than 650 members representing approximately 275 organisations that provide human rights-related grants around the world. The Foundation became a member of IHRFG in 2010.

**4.2.1.** On the occasion of the semi-annual conference organised by the International Human Rights Funders Group, the Foundation, together with the Fund for Global Human Rights (FGHR), the Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights (UAF) and the American Jewish World Service (AJWS), co-organised a one-day learning institute on "***Security of Human Rights Defenders: Supporting Grantee Safety***" on 23 January 2013 in San Francisco. The institute aimed at providing international funders with an overview of the safety and security needs and priorities of human rights defenders and at acquiring tools they need to be as effective as possible in assessing, preventing and responding to security threats faced by grantees.

On this occasion, the Foundation initiated and moderated discussions at panels on "***Shifting Political Contexts***" with a specific focus on Egypt, the overall aim of which was to reflect on strategies that have been and could be used by human rights defenders and funders to counter the systematic chain of threats they face in the transitional phase and create a long-term response to reinforce the human rights movement at this challenging yet crucial time. Members of two Egyptian human rights NGOs were invited to take part and lead discussions at the Institute, during which they surveyed the worrying political and legal developments in Egypt and explored human rights priorities, gaps, opportunities and entry points for funders. This meeting was very well received by both human rights defenders and donors attending and a number of recommendations was further reviewed on the occasions of a telebriefing on "***Egypt in Transition: Opportunities and Challenges for Human Rights Funders***" on 7 February 2013 and IHRFG's annual conference, held in New York on 10-12 July 2013.

Last but not least, a discussion workshop entitled "***Advancing Human Rights in Egypt***" was organised by the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace on 14-15 November 2013 in Brussels. This workshop brought together key Egyptian human rights activists with representatives from a wide range of public and private European, American, and multilateral organisations engaged in supporting human rights in Egypt to share perspectives from the ground, advance their common understanding of the challenges facing the Egyptian human rights community, and generate ideas for moving forward.<sup>12</sup>

**4.2.2.** The Foundation was also invited to speak at a telebriefing organised by the International Human Rights Funders Group (IHRFG) and sponsored by the Channel Foundation on "***Syria: A Role for Human Rights Funders?***" In particular, the Foundation's presentation made use of its experience and extensive consultations with Syrian human rights defenders to survey the situation and dynamics of Syrian civil society and human rights defenders and examine priorities, opportunities, entry points and caveats for human rights funders.

A spontaneous formation of civil society institutions has been unfolding mainly in areas that are no longer under full government control, including in Northern and Eastern Syria. In areas under government control, hosting an important number of internally displaced populations, a not less important activism is on-going but facing government repression and having access to fewer resources. Efforts carried out by these groups take on a wide variety of forms, including monitoring and documentation of violations, capacity-building activities in the fields of citizenship and inter-ethnic dialogue, civilian security, human rights and the rule of law, legal representation and assistance of victims of the reprisal, humanitarian relief, medical and psychological support, creation of local media outlets, etc. These efforts begun to achieve a significant scale in some of the liberated areas, and Turkish cities along the border with Syria, such as Gaziantep, emerged as hubs for Syrian NGOs and international assistance.

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<sup>12</sup> For further information about the conclusions of this workshop, please refer to the [Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies](#).

In addition, the presence of over 2,3 million Syrians fleeing the armed conflict in search of protection and access to essential services in its neighbouring countries has led to a parallel eruption in the number of Syrian civil society and aid organisations in Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. The legal framework applicable to asylum seekers and refugees differs significantly between countries and different laws apply to different groups of people.<sup>13</sup> As a result of this complexity, individuals fleeing Syria are often unaware of their rights. Moreover, the splits between different religious and political fractions over the Syrian issue have led to an increased resentment against Syrian refugees and rampant racism and increased militant tensions have lowered Syrians' abilities to navigate the complexities and avoid potential abuses resulting of being a Syrian refugee. Civil society organisations are thus attempting to provide the afflicted population not only with the highly needed comprehensive guidance and support to meet their immediate need in the fields of relief, medicine and education but they are also implementing activities aimed at enacting change inside Syria focusing on civil peace, community organizing, women rights and democratic transition.

These civil society groups are doing a very courageous and needed work. Nevertheless, the obstacles are daunting and the human rights movement is weakened by a number of elements including threats, financial difficulties and obstacles to join forces and efforts. Should their efforts be consolidated, they could become a meaningful counterweight to the negative factors that are deepening fragmentation of the Syrian society.

Priorities for financial support included, among others, the protection of the safety of human rights defenders; the needed seed support to initiate groundwork for new and timely grassroots initiatives in which priorities should be placed on especially vulnerable groups, including women, children and youth; the need for reinforcing NGOs capacities in documenting human rights violations by all sides in the conflict as well as the need for monitoring, advising and advocating for the legal protection of Syrian refugees. Donors were also advised to remain flexible given that most of the civil society groups, based inside the country, are not registered and operating under severe restrictions and that a number of civil society and human rights groups are side-lined due to operating outside. Moreover, the importance to adopt a holistic approach was underlined considering the complexity and long-lasting consequences of the conflict, by keeping regular contacts with a wide-range of defenders in different regions and by discussing the potential for collaboration and complementary support with a core group of human rights funders, supporting human rights initiatives in Syria.

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<sup>13</sup> In Lebanon for instance, the situation varies significantly between Syrians and Palestinian refugees from Syria.

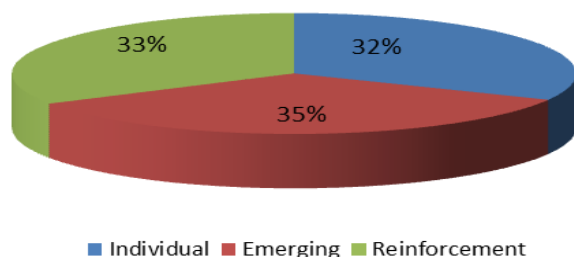


## 5. The 2013 interventions in figures

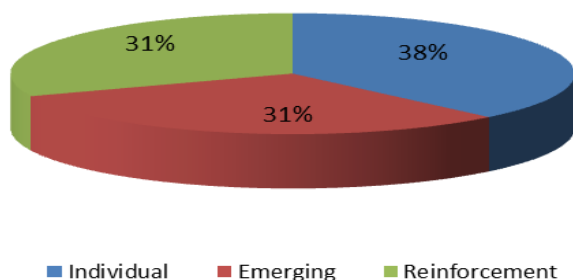
The following charts present the Foundation's support for human rights defenders in 2013.

### 5.1. Types of intervention

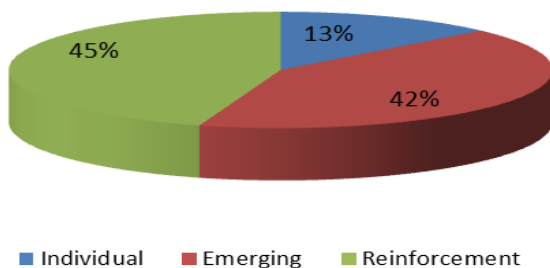
**Distribution based on the number of grants**



**Distribution based on the number of beneficiaries**



**Distribution based on the amounts granted**



*The proportion of urgent interventions in 2013 remained at the same level as 2012, mainly because of the continued deterioration of the human rights situation in Syria.*

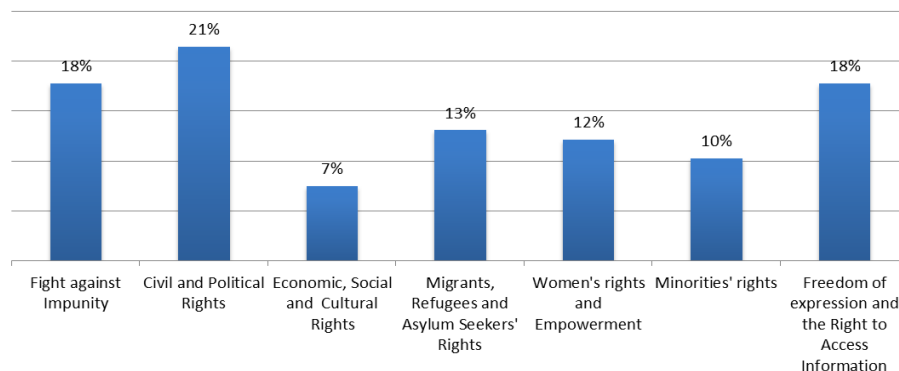
*The Foundation's flexible grants, with amounts that are generally higher than those of urgent grants, benefited a larger number of emerging NGOs, as a result of the new dynamics at work and the greater regional presence of the Foundation in the region.*

*This support proved to be crucial in helping NGOs to launch and consolidate emerging initiatives aimed at bolstering national efforts of transformation, as well as promoting the adoption and implementation of human rights reforms, especially in Tunisia.*

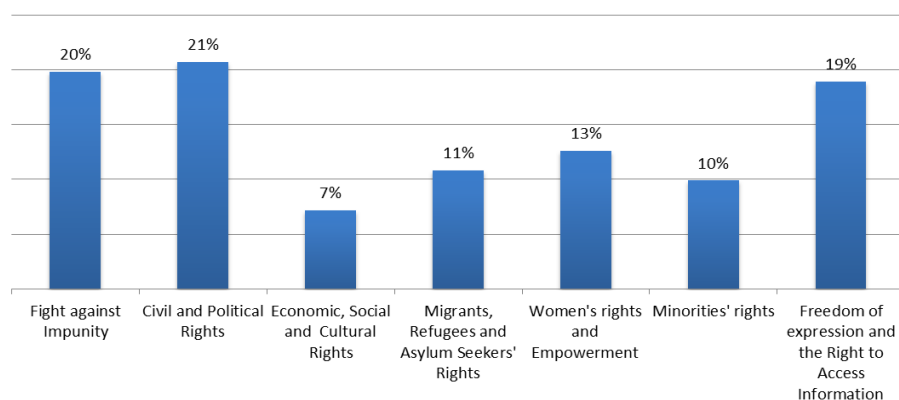
*The average amount of grants provided in 2013 was € 14,065 per defender, which is slightly higher than in 2012. This figure reflects the growing needs expressed by individual defenders at risk and emerging NGOs acting in volatile transition contexts.*

## 5.2. Thematic focus

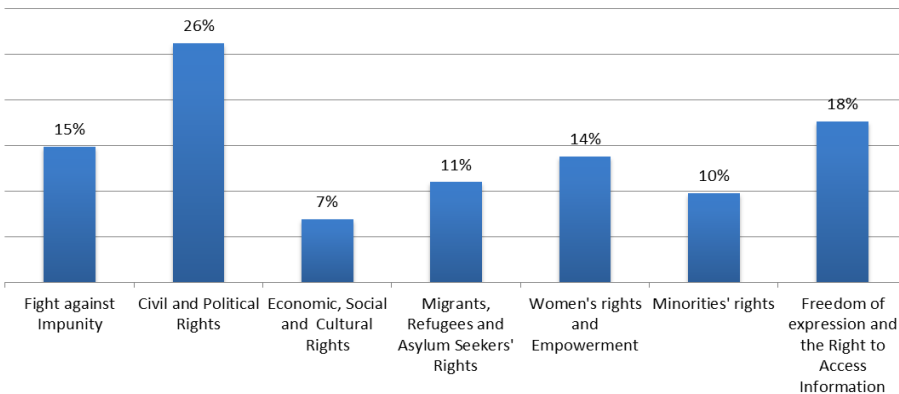
Distribution based on the number of interventions



Distribution based on the number of beneficiaries



Distribution based on the amounts granted



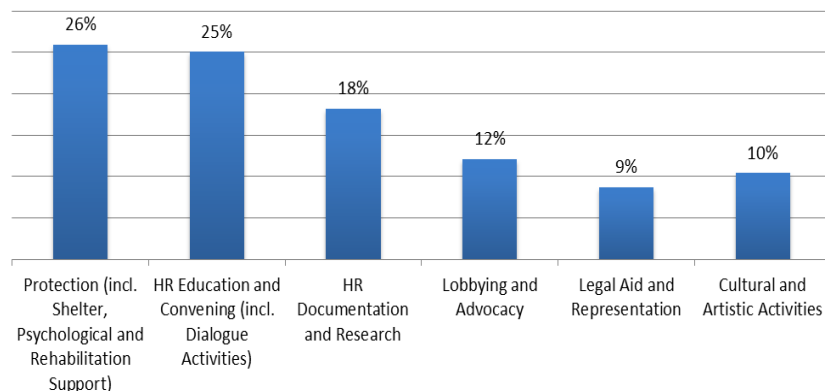
*In 2013, the Foundation continued to be particularly concerned with strengthening activities aimed at promoting reforms of civil, political, economic and social rights and initiatives undertaken to fight impunity, given the inter-connected nature and relevance of these subjects in transition contexts and in environments where repression against defenders grows harsher.*

*Moreover, given the central role of freedom of expression in democracies and the increasing hatred rhetoric in a number of countries, the Foundation has reinforced its support actions to initiatives aimed at promoting pluralist and tolerant views and narratives.*

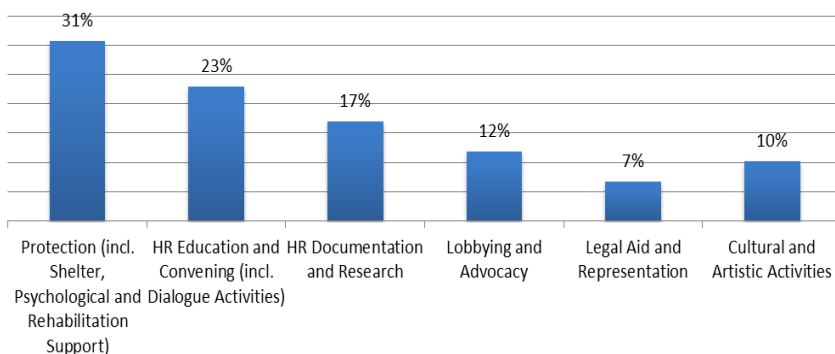
*The proportion of interventions aimed at promoting women's rights and empowerment however shows a decrease relative to previous years. Nevertheless, this area will remain a focus of the Foundation's interventions in the future.*

### 5.3. Activities of recipients

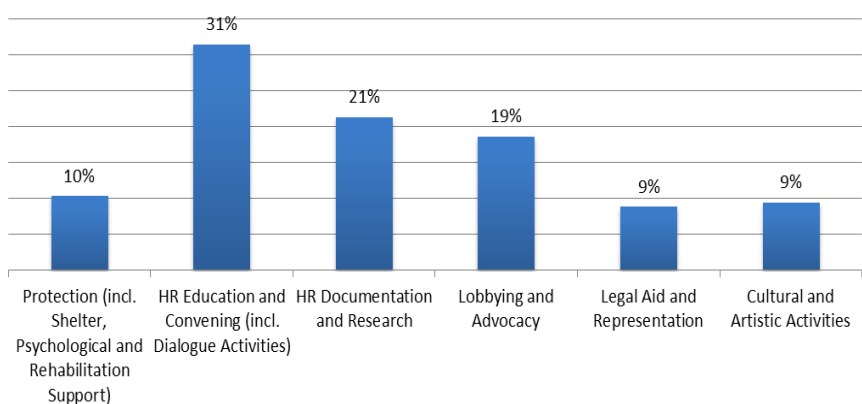
Distribution based on the number of interventions



Distribution based on the number of beneficiaries



Distribution based on the amounts granted

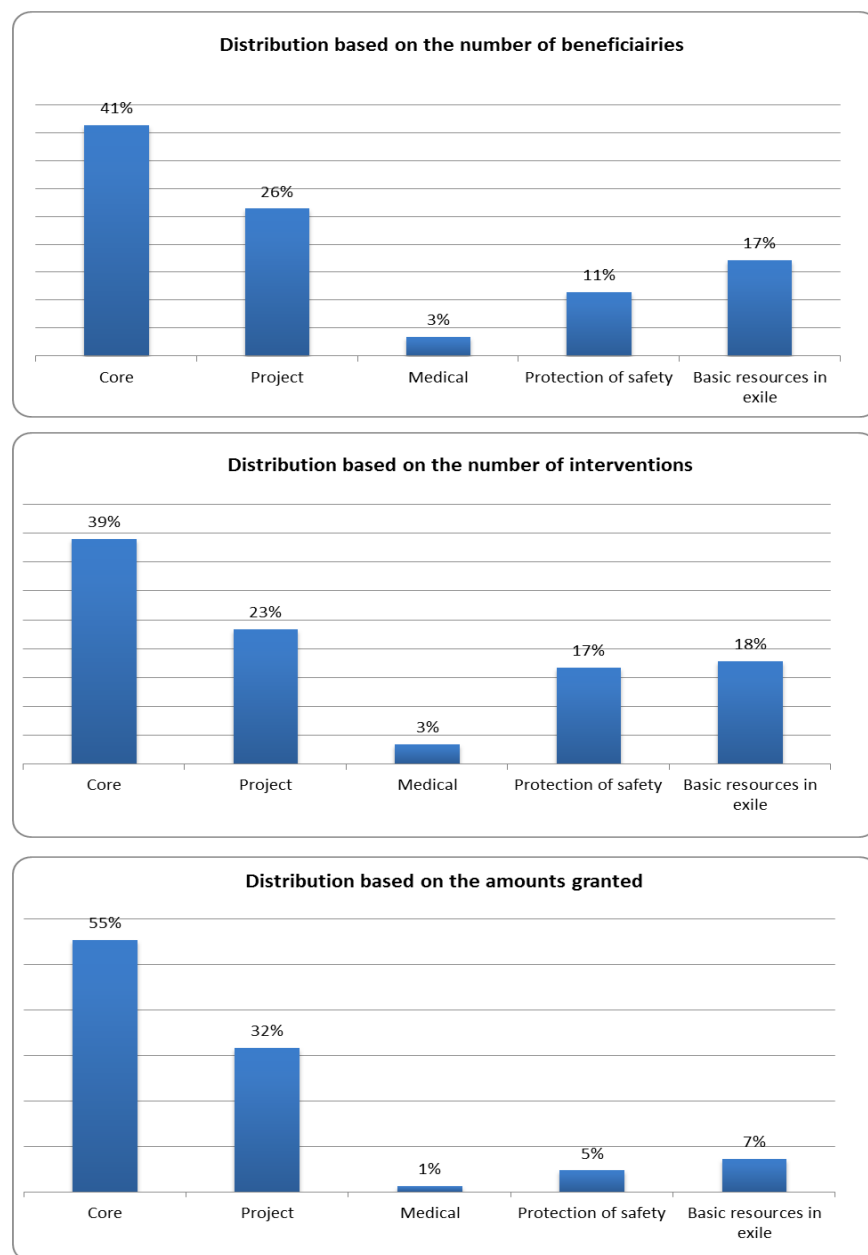


*In 2013, the largest category of activities benefiting the Foundation's beneficiaries aimed at ensuring the protection of human rights defenders, especially in highly hostile and unstable environments.*

*Moreover, complementary activities related to human rights education, human rights documentation and lobbying and advocacy, which are crucial to bolster national efforts of reconstruction and to promote the implementation of human rights reforms, accounted for 55 % of all interventions.*

*In addition, new unifying approaches have been encouraged by the Foundation, such as cultural and artistic activities, as alternatives to traditional means to reach out to a younger audience. Street theaters, music and popular arts are examples of the innovative ways invested by 10% of the recipients to convey messages and transmit the values of democracy, citizenship, justice and human rights.*

#### 5.4. Types of expenditure covered<sup>14</sup>

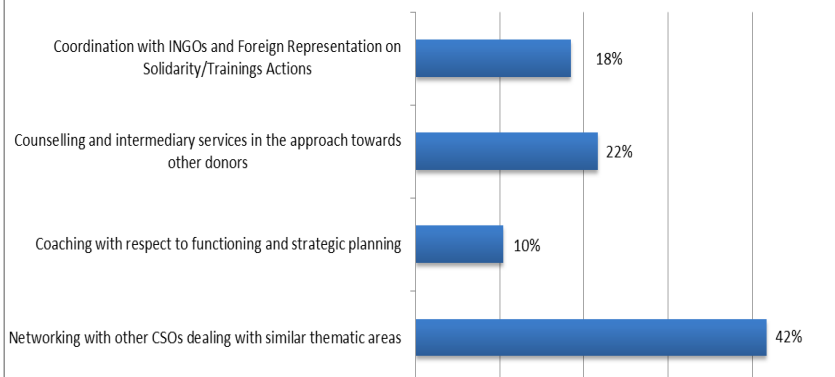


Core expenses accounted for 55 % of the expenditures covered by the Foundation in 2013. Such interventions took place in a region where most donors often tend to limit their funding opportunities to project-related activities while rental fees, the purchase of suitable equipment and the recruitment of staff are essential and can significantly boost the capacities and professionalization of NGOs over the medium and long term.

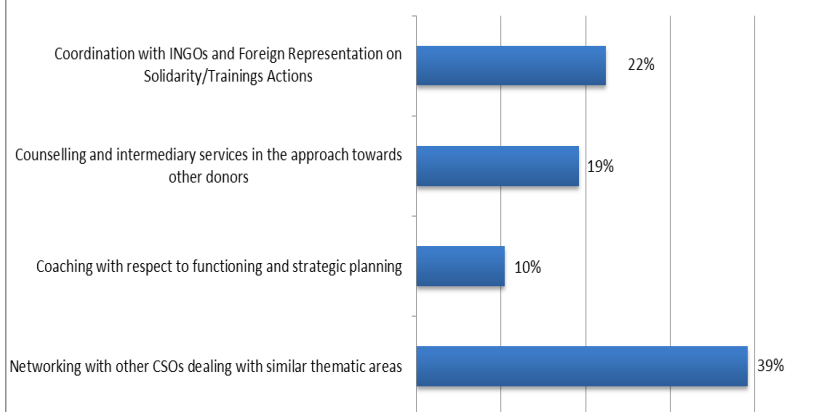
<sup>14</sup> Some interventions may have been allocated to more than one category, as appropriate, in order to generate a comprehensive and relevant overview. As a result, the total for all categories may not equal 100 percent.

### 5.5. Types of indirect support

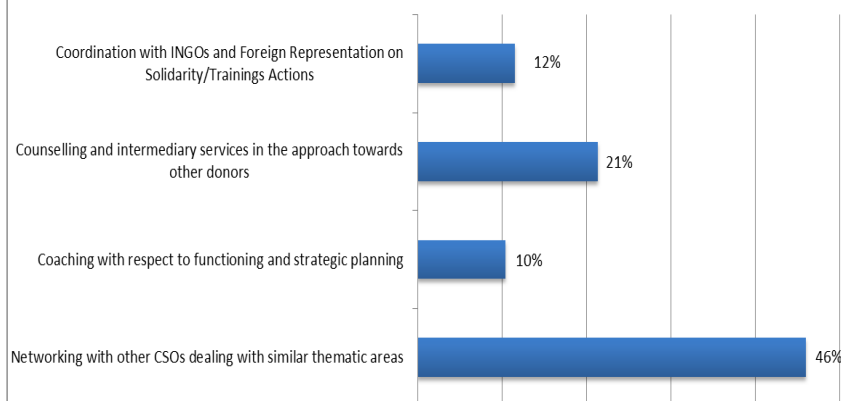
Distribution based on the number of interventions



Distribution based on the number of beneficiaries



Distribution based on the amount granted



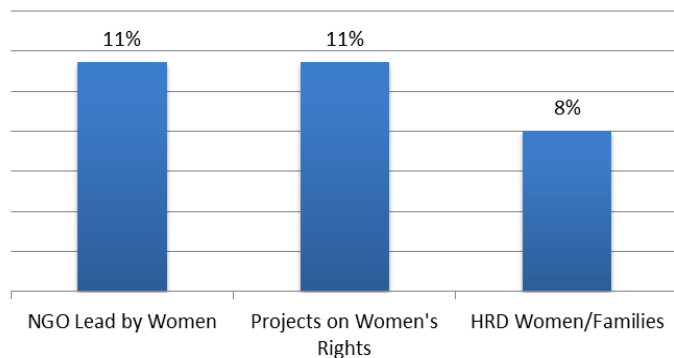
*In addition to providing financial assistance, one of the main goals of the Foundation is to help defenders and NGOs in pursuing their work over the long term. To that end, the Foundation has reinforced its indirect support to human rights defenders, especially its counselling services aimed at strengthening networking opportunities with other civil society organisations dealing with similar thematic areas at the local, national, regional or international level.*

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

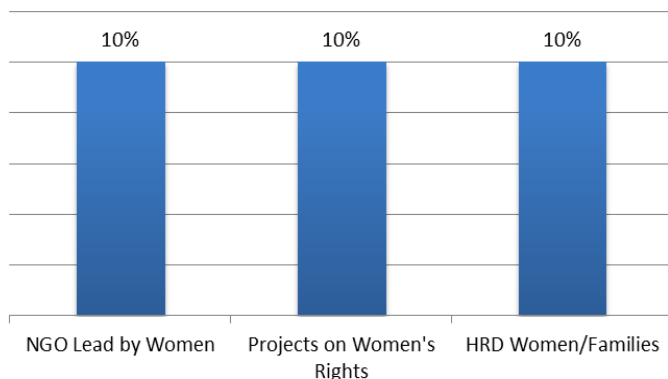
*Last but not least, the Foundation continued to facilitate contacts, act as an intermediary, and assist a number of its beneficiaries in the submission of funding requests to other potential donors. This proved to be valuable since 27 % of recipients of EMHRF funding were able to obtain additional financing from other institutions.*

## 5.6. Gender<sup>15</sup>

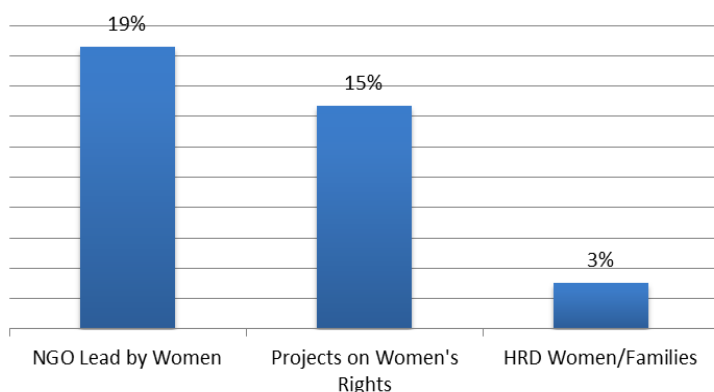
Percentages of total interventions



Percentages of total beneficiaries



Percentages of total amounts granted



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

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

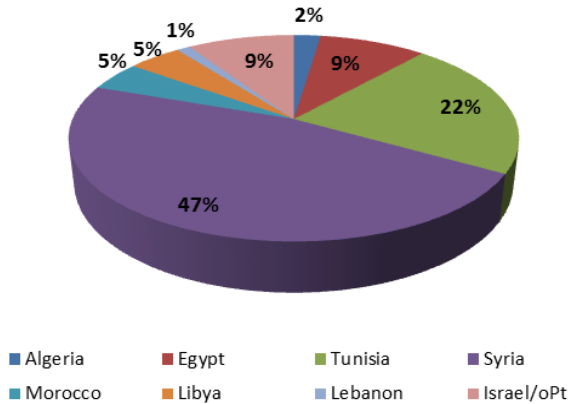
*This is all the more relevant in current circumstances, where women are increasingly the target of various forms of violence and excluded from several transitional processes at work even though they were at the forefront of the revolutions.*

*Considering that the issue of gender equality is central to the democratisation process, the percentage of total amounts allocated, dealing with the protection and promotion of respect for women rights, reached 15 % of all interventions in 2013.*

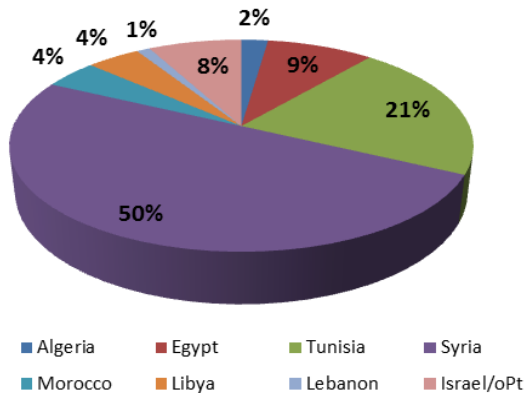
<sup>15</sup> More than one intervention may have been intended both to strengthen the leadership of women defenders and support a project on women's rights. The interventions were allocated between these two categories as appropriate in order to generate a comprehensive and relevant overview.

### 5.7. Countries

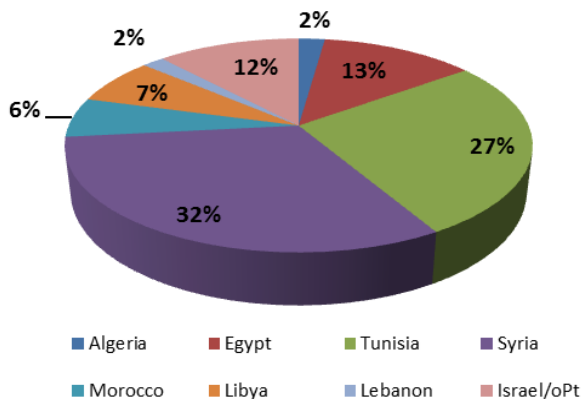
**Distribution based on the number of grants**



**Distribution based on the number of beneficiaries**



**Distribution based on the amount granted**



*The protracted war in Syria has been at the centre of the Foundation's concerns in 2013. In a context of ever harsher repression, the Foundation gave priority to protecting individual defenders, monitoring and documenting human rights violations by all sides in the conflict, providing legal assistance and representation to the victims of reprisals and raising awareness about citizenship and inter-ethnic dialogue.*

*In addition, as the Foundation expanded its local presence in Tunisia, local actors, especially those emerging in neglected regions, remained important recipients of Foundation grants in 2013. For the second year, the Foundation also continued to provide support to emerging civil society initiatives in Libya. These interventions are intended to be reinforced in the future given the irrepressible cycle of violence into which the country has sunk.*

*At the same time, the Foundation was mindful of the challenging environments in which civil society must operate in Algeria and Egypt, as well as of the consequences of the reshuffling of some funders' priorities and politically driven agendas that have affected the work of Moroccan, Lebanese, Israeli and Palestinian civil society actors. These actors have seen funding sources drying up in the past year.*

## **6. Organisational Matters**

### **6.1. External Evaluation 2009-2012**

Commissioned by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DANIDA), an external consultant, Ms. Hilde Hey, has been hired to perform an evaluation of the performances and the relevance of the actions and orientations of the Foundation during the period 2009-2012. In particular, the evaluation aimed at providing an overview of the EMHRF work within its main headings, assessing the relevance and effectiveness of the work, providing feedback about results, process, strengths and weaknesses and to the new orientations decided at the beginning of 2011 as well as assessing progress against agreed goals and objectives.

Overall, this external evaluation confirmed the relevance and effectiveness of the support actions undertaken by the Foundation: *“The political changes that occurred in the Southern Mediterranean have shown that a very small Foundation, such as EMHRF, is very capable of responding quickly to changing political situation. The Foundation is able to respond rapidly to financial needs which may arise for HRDs and it is able to accompany emerging HRDs and their organisations in their aim to mobilise international support, seek funding from mainstream donors and make alliances with local NGOs who have similar goals and aims. EMHRF has become an eminent player in the region because of its trustworthiness and extensive human rights knowledge about the region.”* The executive summary of the evaluation can be found [online](#).

### **6.2. Financial Partnerships**

In 2013, the Foundation continued to enjoy the trust of, and received renewed contributions from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DANIDA), the Open Society Foundations (OSF), the Sigrid Rausing Trust (SRT) and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Moreover, it has explored possibilities of support and received new contributions from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oxfam Novib and the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

### **6.3. Information and Communication**

In 2013, the Foundation maintained its policy of confidentiality regarding most of the information related to the beneficiaries of its funding. This policy was adopted and carried out because of the serious risks to which the activities and persons applying for funding, the recipients of funds or other human rights defenders in the region could be exposed. At the same time, the Foundation ensures that its activities are transparent by providing detailed information to its main donors about its interventions and activities in support of organisations, groups and individual defenders in the region.

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



#### **6.4. Risk Analysis and Sustainability**

The following are the major risks that have been identified by the Foundation with respect to the granting of financial assistance to human rights defenders in countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean:

- ***A risk of increased repression of recipients of funding from the Foundation.*** Assistance received from the Foundation has not, until now, led to physical, legal or psychological repression against defenders because the principle of confidentiality has been strictly enforced in the review of applications, in the decisions to grant support and in the transfer of funds to recipients. Confidentiality rules govern all documents that are made public. These documents mention neither names nor any amounts. Communications are made secure. At the same time, the Foundation informs its main donors about all of its activities and applies the principle of transparency with extreme vigilance.
- ***A risk associated with the freezing or interception of funds by someone other than the beneficiary defender.*** The outcomes have been satisfactory in 2013. Vigilance in this area is on-going. Precautionary steps are taken and various types of information are collected from the recipient before, during and after the transfer.
- ***A risk that funding could have an unintentional destabilising impact on civil society (a worsening of rivalries, disinformation), and the potential consequences of misuse or fraudulent use of the funding (diversion, corruption).*** These risks have been avoided until now, but vigilance remains constant in this area. The small amounts granted represent a significant limit on the risks of misuse. A strict assessment made prior to the decision and the recipient's commitment also tend to limit the risks. Recipients must meet a number of accountability rules and the Foundation monitors them on a regular basis. The Foundation also reserves the right to request that the funds be reimbursed when the purpose of the contract has not been met.
- ***A risk of sudden escalation of violence resulting in an unprecedented level of required urgent reactions or the halting of NGO activities.*** In some countries, especially Syria, Libya and recently Egypt, conditions have been created in which extreme forms of violence become routine. In turn, this empowers the most radical elements on all sides, justifying the worst forms of brutality and prompting appalling retaliation in response. The Foundation is highly vigilant to such possibility and in this case, it will endeavour to contact its partners to coordinate a holistic response to provide complementary resources when needed. Moreover, the Foundation may adopt a flexible approach anticipating and accommodating the fact that actions supported may not be fully implemented on time and as initially agreed upon, taking into consideration alternative implementation plans.

The sustainability of the Foundation's actions is based on the following elements:

- Access to flexible, quick and localised assistance is necessary and highly needed; it also bolsters significantly the ability of human rights defenders to work in the region.
- The Foundation remains attentive to its partners and to civil society on an ongoing basis through its regular visits and presence and its monitoring activities, which enable it to react to changes in local and regional conditions and to respond to the needs that are expressed.
- The Foundation encourages, as needed, the participation and mobilisation of other local, national, regional or international organisations in efforts to provide long-term institutional support to defenders and CSOs.
- The Foundation concentrates its work on the local level in a clearly circumscribed region, which means that it can develop a specific image and be a preferred partner in its field of activity. Moreover, the Foundation intervenes in a region where access to funding for human rights defenders is difficult to

obtain due to the lack of endogenous sources of financing and the ever-increasing barriers to their access to external funding.

- Thanks to the close contacts it maintains with civil society actors and organisations, the Foundation is in a position to offer advice and act as an intermediary between defenders and international donors in those cases where a funding request is a clear candidate for support by another organisation.
- The Foundation takes a rigorously calculated risk by granting modest levels of funding to defenders at risk, small emerging organisations and ground-breaking activities.
- Thanks to the composition of its Board, which includes officials from several international and regional organisations as well as acknowledged experts in affairs of the region, the Foundation has direct access to NGOs and defenders, which enables it to benefit from a unique and highly qualified source of knowledge and to obtain quickly reliable and detailed information needed for its work, thus improving the quality and targeting of its actions.
- The Foundation actively seeks to secure funding and diversify sources of funding in support of its activities aimed at providing assistance to human rights defenders in the region.
- Last but not least, the Foundation grounds its intervention strategy in the right to freedom of association.

### **6.5. Internal Governance**

The composition of the Foundation's Board, made up of nine members who fulfil their mandate on a volunteer basis, remained unchanged in 2013. However, the Board has started a process of replacing current members, whose terms are coming to an end in 2015, which will integrate an overlapping "training period" for new members in 2014. In 2013, the Board of the Foundation was assisted by a Secretariat consisting of the following staff members:

- Anne-Sophie Schaeffer (graduate in International Public Law), employed full-time as Programme Director in Denmark ;
- Améline Jaskowiak (graduate in International Economics), employed full-time as Grants Administrator in Denmark ;
- Rami Salhi (graduate in Sociology), employed part-time as Regional Consultant Maghreb in Tunisia ;
- Samy Lendvai-Karmout (graduate in International Relations), employed full-time as Regional Support Assistant Mashrek in Denmark since 1<sup>st</sup> May 2013 (employed previously as Intern);
- Anne-Sophie Jouanneau (graduate in Political Sciences), employed full-time as Regional Support Assistant Maghreb in Tunisia since 11 March 2013;
- Nael Georges (PhD in Human Rights), employed part-time as Regional Consultant Mashrek in France since 18 November 2013;
- Katrine Høybye Frederiksen (graduate in Foreign Languages), employed part-time as Administrative Officer in Denmark ;
- Catherine Lafont (graduate in Business Administration), employed full-time as Intern in Denmark since 1<sup>st</sup> June 2013.

The EMHRF has also entered into a renewed formal partnership with the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) which notably covers the issues of the sharing of offices and the related expenses. Such an arrangement is made to regulate and minimize the administrative costs of both organisations. At last, the audit of the Foundation's accounts was performed by the Copenhagen office of *Deloitte*.

## Appendix: Synopsis of Grants Applications in 2013

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

In 2013, the Foundation received and dealt with **405** grants applications

Per Status:		
<i>Granted</i>	85	<b>21%</b>
<i>Rejected</i>	226	<b>56%</b>
<i>Pending</i>	92	<b>23%</b>

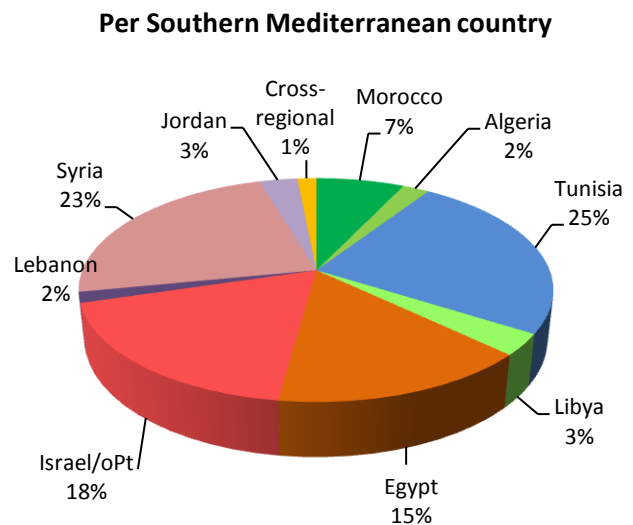
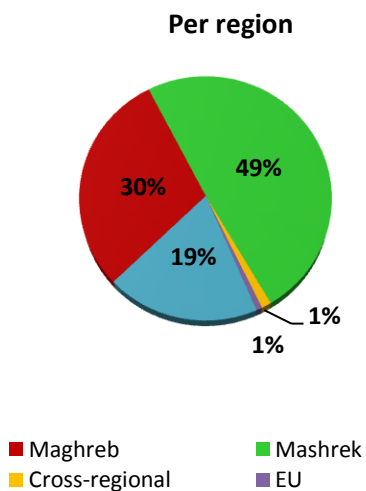
  

Per Type:		
<i>Urgent</i>	62	<b>15%</b>
<i>Standard</i>	250	<b>62%</b>
<i>Inquiry</i>	93	<b>23%</b>

The total amount granted by the Foundation was **€ 1,255,343.59**

### 2. Geographic Distribution

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



### 3. Reasons for Rejection

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

- The activities suggested in the application fall outside the scope of the promotion or defence of universally-recognised human rights standards. These applications accounted for **48 %** of all proposals rejected.
- The application does not fall or encompass human rights activities within the geographical mandate of the Foundation, i.e. Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel. These applications accounted for **36 %** of all proposals rejected.
- The applicant is a well-established NGO which hasn't experienced any problem in securing funding from mainstream donors. These applications accounted for **8,4 %** of all proposals rejected.

However, even in the case where the application does not fall within the mandate of the Foundation, the Secretariat has been advising the applicant to contact other potential donors better positioned to support the proposal. This is especially the case for proposals dealing with threatening situations facing human rights defenders in another region or with specialised areas of intervention, such as the Media.

These ineligible applications that have been redirected to other potential partners and donors accounted for **11 %** of all applications rejected.

### 4. Average Response Time

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

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

<b>Total Average Response Time</b>	<b>19 days</b>
✓ <i>for urgent request</i>	10.6 days
✓ <i>for standard application</i>	24 days
✓ <i>for inquiry</i>	9 days