

The Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders
(EMHRF)

External Evaluation Report, 2009-2012

Supporting Human Rights Defenders: Analyzing Short Term Results

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Executive Summary

The Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders (EMHRF) is a small, dynamic funding organization for human rights defenders in the Southern Mediterranean region. The Foundation has substantially evolved since 2009. The 2011 revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa have provided human rights defenders and human rights organizations with new opportunities and diverse constraints to which the Foundation has responded rapidly. The Foundation has strengthened its operations and increased the number of grants provided. Both emergency grants for human rights defenders and human rights organizations at risk, and strategic grants to human rights organizations have expanded over the years.

The present report contains the findings of the evaluation of the Foundation's work. The present evaluation builds on the previous evaluations undertaken and specifically analyzes the period 2009 to 2012. EMHRF has fully implemented the mapping of grantees and applicants as recommended in the 2009 evaluation. Furthermore, the Foundation has standardized reporting mechanisms by its grantees and works closely with them to ensure the quality of reporting to EMHRF. The present evaluation has therefore been able to concentrate on the results the work of the Foundation brings about and on the achievements in relation to the overall objectives of EMHRF. As a means to analyze results, this evaluation has engaged in case study analysis of selected projects supported by the Foundation.

Overall it can be said that through financial support and non-financial support EMHRF is furthering the work of human rights defenders in the Southern Mediterranean region. By 2012, EMHRF was supporting more human rights defenders in the region, through its grant giving than determined in its logical framework for action defined in 2009. Also in terms of non-financial support EMHRF engaged in more activities than planned. As a result, EMHRF fulfills its specific objectives.

Relevance

Providing emergency and strategic funding to human rights defenders is still highly relevant in the Middle East and North Africa. Small **emergency funding** in a timely and secure manner to human rights defenders is essential under political volatile circumstances. Human rights defenders are at the forefront of taking initiatives to address human rights violations in a peaceful manner. However, in unstable political situations they face threats and repression and are often at high risk of prosecution, also affecting their families. The relevance and effectiveness of emergency funding for human rights defenders provided by EMHRF lies in the fact that under political insecure circumstances human rights defenders obtain legitimacy for their work and can more easily continue carrying out their human rights activities. Furthermore, emergency funding brings human rights defenders into contact with foreign like-minded organizations allowing them to build an international network of support, thereby diminishing potential risks.

In **Algeria** and **Egypt** human rights organizations are restricted in their access to foreign funding and often face the consequences of closure. In these cases timely and secure emergency funding has been very relevant for human rights defender organizations to remain operative. Through **emergency funding** authorities fail to curb the voice or activities of human rights defenders.

Strategic funding supports human rights defender organizations that do not have the capacity to apply for mainstream donor funding. On average these are small-scale projects, often outside of

capital cities, undertaken by individuals united by similar experiences of human rights violations, but with little or no contact to national, regional or international human rights networks of like-minded organizations. Through intense contact of the grantees with the Foundation during application, implementation and reporting procedure, each initiative is guided to improve its strategy and project management skills. If appropriate EMHRF functions as an intermediary with national, regional and international established human rights groups. Together this makes human rights defender organizations a stronger actor of civil society, more capable of engaging in international advocacy and more skilled in seeking mainstream donor funding.

Results

Results of **emergency** and **strategic funding** by EMHRF are short-term. For this evaluation results have been analyzed on a case-by-case basis. The evaluation has shown that emergency funding to human rights defenders in **Syria** brings about information on human rights violations, internationally used. This information will also be vital for the process of transition once the armed conflict has stopped. The emergency funding to the human rights defender in Syria also made it possible that the work became known internationally (the human rights defender received international awards) and diminishing risks to the human rights defender. On the whole, contributing to the continuation of the human rights work.

The **emergency funding** to a human rights defender organization in **Egypt** is also an example of what emergency funding in a timely and secure manner can bring about. The emergency funding provided by EMHRF in Egypt allowed the human rights defender organization to remain open and thereby remain a voice of civil society. Furthermore, the emergency funding enabled the organization to engage the Egyptian authorities in a legal process over foreign funding for NGOs. This legal process sets a precedent for future cases in which, foreign funding access is denied by the Egyptian authorities.

Strategic funding provided to a human rights defender organization over a longer period in **Tunisia** has had a positive outcome. The Foundation supported a social movement in the Southern Tunisian mining area for some years. This human rights defender organization used a human rights based approach to make its case before the revolution and was able to adapt and develop into a new human rights organization which addresses economic and social rights in all of Tunisia with support from mainstream donors. This is precisely what the Foundation was set-up to do, provide financial and non-financial support for human rights defenders and human rights organizations at an early stage of the organization, and accompany (coach) them to obtain funding for their initiatives from mainstream donors.

Non-financial support is a central part of EMHRF's work with its grantees. The main activities undertaken are coaching grantees in terms of their management and strategic planning, networking with local civil society organizations which address the same themes as grantees, coordinating solidarity activities with other international NGOs and intermediary services with potential donors for grantees. This work has substantially expanded over the years as the number of grantees has also expanded. The work is very labor intensive and requires close contact with the grantees. In countries where NGOs can operate more freely, as in **Tunisia** presently, employing a local consultant is vital to enable a more hands on approach.

The expansion of the Foundation's granting capacity has also increased the overall work of the secretariat and the board. Especially the Foundation's reporting obligations and networking capacity are important but very time consuming. Nevertheless, EMHRF is very diligent in making grant giving its main task.

Recommendations

As restrictions for NGOs to receive foreign funding in **Algeria** and **Egypt** remain in place, the Foundation needs to acknowledge that emergency funding requirements for human rights defender organizations will be called upon more frequently and that the maximum of grant allocation will not suffice in emergency support to human rights defender organizations. The Foundation is recommended to consider adopting within the category of emergency funding an appropriate maximum funding for human rights defender organizations.

EMHRF is recommended to encourage human rights defender organizations in **Egypt** and **Algeria** to engage the legal system to question the legality of restrictions on foreign funding for NGOs where appropriate and continue to strengthen human rights defender organizations' advocacy work with international actors.

The Foundation is recommended to continue expanding its reporting on **results**, both of emergency and strategic funding and to continue working with the grantees to report on the short term results they have achieved with regards to human rights change.

EMHRF should continue its cooperation with **like-minded funding organizations** in Europe and the United States. Cooperation amongst funders will reinforce strategies towards human rights defenders in the Southern Mediterranean region and therefore strengthen the position of human rights defenders in the countries themselves.

The Foundation is recommended to seek **local consultants** as partners, at a time when local political situations allow NGOs to operate more freely. This will allow the secretariat to concentrate on those countries where NGOs cannot operate freely and allow the local consultant to have a hands-on approach with newly developing local human rights initiatives.

The reporting burden on the **secretariat** is rather high because of its expanded granting budget, however the secretariat has not expanded substantially. The Foundation is encouraged to engage in a dialogue with its European donors to seek a more coordinated reporting mechanism. This will contribute to keeping the EMHRF's secretariat focused on grant giving to human rights defenders.

In 2014, EMHRF will celebrate its tenth anniversary. During the past ten years the initial nine **board** members have very successfully institutionalized a secretariat and standardized grant making procedures. To retain successful grant making to human rights defenders in the Southern Mediterranean region and for the continuity of the Foundation it is vital that board members initiate a process of designating new board members. Herewith the sustainability of the Foundation as an institution will be guaranteed and allow for the incorporation of new human rights dynamism to be represented on the board.