



ANNUAL 2019

FOREWORD

It pleases us that PEN Emergency Fund has been able, once again in 2019, to grant financial support thirty three times to writers and journalists who were in distress and very urgently requiring aid. For the monetary means involved, we owe great thanks to the individuals and organizations actively supporting the fund, namely Lira Fund, Netherlands PEN and dozens of dedicated members of Netherlands PEN, Finnish PEN, Swedish PEN, PEN Norway, PEN Switzerland-French speaking, PEN Slovenia and PEN San Miguel d'Allende. We would also like to thank the Dutch Writers Guild, several Dutch publishing houses and individuals from the literary world, national and international. They have all provided us with the support needed to continue our work at the fund. In December German PEN made an appeal to its members to support our fund. Another heartwarming initiative came from the Dutch elementary school (De Ark, in Espel) which held a charity walk. The proceeds went to, among others, a writer of children's books and his family, who are in dire straits in a war zone.

We are pleased that Paulien Loerts, general director of Singel Uitgeverijen, has been part of the foundation's board since June 2019. Our gratitude goes to PEN International's Protection Team Writers at Risk, coordinated by Cathy McCann, for further productive collaboration in 2019.

The famous words of Edward Bulwer-Lytton remain relevant, also when the word 'pen' is written in capitals: *The PEN is mightier than the sword.*'

OBJECTIVE

The foundation PEN Emergency Fund - also known as Stichting Schrijvers in Nood (Writers in Need Foundation) - aims to '*grant monetary support to writers/journalists, anywhere in the world, who for political or ideological reasons have been robbed of their physical freedom or are otherwise in dire circumstances and need temporary financial assistance.*'

BOARD

The board consists of four volunteers. Serving on the Executive Committee are Wim Jurg (treasurer) and the undersigned. The assistance of the other board members, René Appel and Paulien Loerts, is called upon when important decisions need to be made, as for instance with policy matters. The entire board of the foundation meets at least twice annually; the Executive Committee holds ongoing consultations. Should it be necessary, advice can be obtained from the Advisory Board, whose members include Eric Lax (USA), Joanne Leedom-Ackerman (USA), Larry Siems (USA), Eugene Schoulgin (Sweden/Turkey), Tienchi Martin-Liao (China/Germany), David Van Reybrouck (Belgium) and Rudolf Geel (Netherlands).

INCOME

Since 1971 the fund has been built primarily with the contributions of Dutch PEN members – of this we are proud – then by those from international PEN centers, via bequests and long-term grants by organizations such as Oxfam Novib, Democracy & Media Foundation and Lira Fund.

In 1973 PEN International's former president, the German author Heinrich Böll, donated to the recently established PEN Emergency Fund ten percent of the sum that he had received in 1972 as winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature. Thanks to this major donation, the PEN Emergency Fund was able to have an excellent start.

Together they have been able to give the fund, for decades, a stable financial capacity. In 2019 fund-raising activities have led to several wonderful gifts.

SUBSIDIES AND FUND-RAISING

For years now we have noticed a downward trend with respect to the granting of subsidies. This is partly the consequence of a marked increase in requests being submitted to charitable funds. Furthermore a fund such as PEN Emergency Fund is cursed with the shortcoming that it cannot allow a subsidy-granter to 'score points' by way of photographs, names and facts, since its work takes place behind the scenes. The publication of information could, in fact, pose an immediate danger to the lives of authors whom we help. Their cases are known only to the investigators at PEN International and to our organization.

In 2019 Lira Foundation was the main granter of subsidies. We are continuing unabatedly to seek new sources of long-term financial support.

PROCEDURE AND GRANTING OF AID

PEN Emergency Fund collaborates closely with the research department of PEN International in London, known as the Protection Team Writers at Risk, which compiles the dossiers for us. The work of the fund is a continual process; it doesn't stop during holidays or vacations. Its structure is simple, clear, inexpensive and effective. The Executive

Committee can, if necessary, act immediately; and no costly buildings need to be maintained. All of the money contributed to the fund goes to the authors in dire circumstances, sometimes even on the day of the request.

For some authors, emergency aid suffices; others are able to seek follow-up assistance via organizations such as ICORN (International Cities of Refugee Network), the international union of cities offering relief to refugee writers. In the Netherlands the cities Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Leiden belong to this. From this point of view, the fund could be compared to an ambulance and ICORN to a hospital.

Until 17 June 2019 the awarded gifts amounted to a maximum of 1250 euros per author. After that date the amount was increased to 1500 euros.

In six urgent cases, as an exception to the principle of a once-only gift, a supplementary sum was granted to an author who had previously come to us for help.

The thirty-three cases of granted aid in 2019 (see the financial report as well) reflect where writers and journalists faced major problems in 2019, yet by no means does it allow one to conclude that other countries were free of problems. The most striking development in this respect is the absence, in 2019, of requests from Turkey, where detained authors were not in a position to ask for support.

Eight authors came from Syria, five from Iran, four from Eritrea, two from Palestine, Iraq, Azerbaijan and Philippines, then one author from Yemen, Sudan, Burundi, Bangladesh, Egypt, Nigeria, Cameroon and Honduras.

PRIORITIES

Just as in previous years, the work done behind the scenes to support writers in need had, in 2019, the highest priority. Additional importance was given, both nationally and internationally, to the supply of information, aimed at pointing out the existence of the fund to writers and drawing interest from potential donors. This took place by means of flyers (in Dutch and English), newsletters, lectures, speeches, (social) media and word of mouth.

Anyone who wishes to support our fund can find all relevant information on our website: www.penemergencyfund.com

On the website of PEN International, the fund has its own page: <https://pen-international.org/supporting-writers-in-exile/pen-emergency-fund>.

ACCOUNTABILITY

In accordance with the statutes, an explanation of decision-making policy in 2018 (and the first half of 2019) was provided during the Assembly of the PEN International Congress (Manila, Philippines, 01-04 October) and at the General Meeting of PEN Netherlands (Amsterdam, 01 November).

THREE CASES

The following three examples of cases, made anonymous for the security of the authors concerned, offer a view of the types of situations faced by the writers/journalists who come to us and why they badly needed the fund's support.

Case 1

In April the fund received a request for financial assistance for a young journalist/writer. Her country has gone through various periods of upheaval. Since the start of the twenty-first century she has written about political and non-political matters in a range of newspapers, magazines and online news sites, covering for instance protest demonstrations against her country's government, clashes of the military and police with the demonstrators as well as human and animal rights, while criticizing the inhumane behavior of local politicians. Several years ago the requirements for a journalist were made more stringent.

An article that she wrote about the murder of a journalist was reason for the newspaper for which she worked to dismiss her; it meant the end of her career there, because she had opposed the current regime. Her name was given to the security forces. At a different newspaper she continued writing critical articles, particularly about corruption in the business world, until the newspaper's publisher was arrested and put in prison. Since then she has not been able to publish her work and is thus having great financial difficulties. Her husband died several years ago, and her two children are seriously ill.

In addition to threats from the government, which is looking for her, she has been continually threatened by her in-laws, who are pressuring her to marry a family member who is already married, this making it possible for her children to be taken away from her and be raised by her in-laws. An attempt to kidnap the children, with the help of bribed local policemen, failed. She now lives, in hiding with her children, in great poverty. The fund has granted her the maximum contribution, which she is putting toward medical costs for her children and living expenses, while waiting for relief from ICORN.

Case 2

Submitted in April was a request from a young journalist, writer and human-rights activist; he worked for the government and reported for the radio on a range of topics. When he presented a program about revolutionary developments in an Arab country, the broadcast was taken off the air; he was blindfolded by undercover agents and interrogated at an unknown location about his motives for raising this issue, after which he was imprisoned for several years. During the first months he was tortured with beatings and electric shocks on a weekly basis. On being released he discovered that a family member had committed suicide as a result of the political situation and various colleagues had been rounded up in the aftermath of a failed military coup.

He fled to a neighboring country and ended up in a refugee camp, where fearing recognition by security forces from his own country, he requested asylum from UNHCR. In the place to which he was assigned, however, he did not feel safe either, due to the fact that information about him was circulating on the Internet and he was receiving anonymous threats by e-mail. One day two men in civilian clothing came to visit him, asking whether he was the journalist they were looking for - which he denied - and saying that they would be back. Because of the good relations between the country where he is staying and the government of his home country, he fears that he will be sent back. He needs money in order to renew his expired residency permit. If he does not do so, it is very likely that he will be deported to his home country. The fund granted the maximum contribution.

Case 3

We received a request from a writer/blogger who had anonymously made critical comments about her government, about crime and the war on drugs, on her blog as well as on Facebook, until her identity was

discovered. From that point on she received threats and hate-mails, which included threats of rape. Because of this she had to move temporarily to safer surroundings. Someone posing as an employee of a telecommunications company came and took photographs of her and questioned her about her writing activities. Meanwhile, she was legally charged with slander by a pro-government fellow citizen living in another part of the world.

In order to make ends meet, she is doing night shifts for a commercial institute. Threats are still being made. Her health and well-being have been deeply affected by the court case. The outcome of the charge against her is not known. She needs requested aid for substantial costs, also for her mother, who is suffering from a deadly illness, and for psychological help. The fund granted her the maximum contribution.

TO CONCLUDE

2019 was again a year in which freedom of expression was seriously violated in many countries. By way of the fund's concrete assistance to writers who have the immense courage to write critically about issues that can pose great, sometimes life-threatening risks to them, we hope to contribute to the realization of two closely related aims of PEN: the free distribution of literature and freedom of speech. During the presentation of the 2020 Oxfam Novib PEN Awards in The Hague on 16 January 2020, Jennifer Clement expressed the second aspect as follows: 'At PEN we believe unshakably in the need for writers to be able to criticise, parody, and mock at the highest levels'.

Job Degenaar, chair (February 2020)

Translation: Elizabeth O'Brien

Among the supporters of PEN Emergency Fund are:

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