



2021 Annual Report

FOREWORD

There is no doubt that in 2021, the fiftieth year of the PEN Emergency Fund's existence, the coronavirus pandemic continued to worsen the situations of writers worldwide, sometimes to a severe degree. The applications for financial support showed us that, this year too, non-democratic governments were misusing the presence of the virus to isolate critical writers and journalists. This took place by way of the silencing of critics, for instance, which resulted in a loss of their income, and the banning of demonstrations, sometimes followed by arrests, prosecution, detention, torture or worse. In addition to this, the global increase in the cost of medical care and groceries brought difficulties to the daily lives of authors, also those forced to flee to other countries.

The work of the fund itself could luckily, just as in 2020, simply continue despite a reduction in the number of the fund's board meetings and consultations taking place almost exclusively via e-mail. The lack of necessary contact with PEN colleagues (conferences and other meetings were cancelled) was much missed. Fortunately, the fund was nonetheless able to assist thirty-five writers in dire need.

OBJECTIVE

Foundation PEN Emergency Fund - also known as Stichting Fonds Schrijvers in Nood (Foundation Writers in Need Fund) - 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 desperate need and require temporary financial aid.'*

BOARD

The fund's board has four members. The day-to-day board includes Wim Jurg (treasurer) and the undersigned (chair). The other board members, René Appel and Paulien Loerts, are called upon for assistance when, for instance, policy-related decisions must be taken. The entire board of the foundation meets at least twice annually; the day-to-day board is in constant consultation. When necessary, advice can also be obtained from members of the Advisory Board, who include Eric Lax (USA), Joanne Leedom-Ackerman (USA), Larry Siems (USA), Eugene Schoulgin (Sweden/Turkey), Tienchi Martin-Liao (China/Germany), David Van Reybrouck (Belgium) en Rudolf Geel (Netherlands).

INCOME

The fund is entirely dependent upon the goodwill of others. This year we have not been disappointed with that. We received donations from the Lira Fonds, from PEN Nederland, PEN Vlaanderen and PEN Finland. The Dutch Auteursbond granted us help in various ways, including a Christmas 2021 appeal to support us. And many, sometimes very generous gifts from members of PEN Nederland and others in the literary world helped to make up for deficits. One PEN member donated the proceeds from his book.

SUBSIDIES AND FUNDRAISING

For years now, our situation has hardly been favorable in terms of the structural provision of subsidies from charitable funds of the government and NGOs. This is partly due to a significant increase in requests for aid. Furthermore, a subsidy provider cannot show photographs or list names and facts in the media, seeing that our work takes place behind the scenes and must remain so: because the publication of information could put the assisted authors in immediate danger. Their cases are known only to the investigators at PEN International and to us.

PROCEDURE AND ALLOCATION

In nearly all of the cases, requests for aid arrive via PEN International's Protection Team Writers at Risk, a team of experienced researchers with whom we work closely and who compile the dossiers for us. Among these requests are also those of writers awaiting long-term placement with ICORN, an organization that has more than seventy shelters for refugee writers, mainly in Western Europe.

Occasionally an author will contact the fund directly. When this happens the case is passed on, according to standard procedure, to PEN International's Protection Team Writers at Risk, which finishes completing the fund's application form with the applicant and verifies it. Then the application is sent to us for possible financial assistance.

The fund grants aid to professional writers, journalists, editors and/or publishers anywhere in the world, who are in dire need as a result of what they wrote or published and urgently require money. The assistance is provided once per author. In exceptional cases a supplement can follow this, if the situation remains critical.

The construction under which the fund operates is simple, clear, inexpensive and effective. The board's work is done on a volunteer basis. No buildings need to be maintained. All of the money that comes into the fund goes to the authors in need, sometimes on the very day of a request. Due to the small number of board members, the fund is able – and that is our great strength – to act quickly.

In 2021 the awarded grants amounted to a maximum of 1500 euros per author until 1 July, and 2000 euros after 1 July. This raise was deemed necessary by the board, due to the global increase in the cost of living and medication prices. In a few urgent situations, a supplemental sum was granted as an exception to the principle of a one-time gift.

In a considerable number of cases the authors had already fled to a safer country and needed money for medication, sometimes after physical and/or psychological abuse, and for living costs, sometimes while awaiting longer-term placement with ICORN.

The countries of origin of the thirty-five supported authors are a reflection of problematic countries with regard to freedom of expression (which is not to say that the countries not represented are free of such problems). A grant was awarded to five authors from Syria, for example, four authors from Afghanistan and three from Myanmar, Palestine, Bangladesh and Egypt. The complete list of allocations per country can be found in the specification of awarded aid in the financial overview of income and expenses (p. 12).

TRANSACTION PROBLEMS

In 2022 we had three instances of payment problems due to governments or banks that refused to cooperate or even attempted to deny the existence of the transaction. Ultimately, everyone received the intended sum of financial support, with the exception of one transaction which is still in progress. In another case, twenty percent of the transferred sum was confiscated for a police investigation of the purpose of the transaction.

PRIORITIES

As in previous years, work done behind the scenes to support writers in dire need had the highest priority in 2021. In addition to this, the distribution of information, both nationally and internationally, continued to be a major activity, the objective being twofold: to inform writers-in-need of the fund's existence and to attract potential donors. Due to the pandemic, this took place digitally via e-mailings, attention in the media and online conferences, as well as via paper flyers (in Dutch and English) and mailings via the postal service.

JUSTIFICATION OF POLICY

The financial assets, which the fund must secure in the years to come, have slightly diminished this year. Among the causes is the necessary raising of the financial support since 1 July 2021. Our decision to abolish the limit on the number of requests (30 - 35) has not resulted in an increase of these.

Due to the coronavirus, only a small edition of the paper version of the 2020 Annual Report was distributed. However, the digital version of this can be found on our website. During the Centenary Congress of PEN International that was held online from 20 to 25 September, a Delegate Pack containing an extensive explanation of our policy in 2020 was provided in English, French and Spanish. At the online general meeting of PEN Nederland's members, held on 10 November, we also provided, in accordance with the statutes, a justification of management policy in 2020 as well as an explanation of developments in 2021.

FIVE CASES

The following examples of cases, made anonymous and not traceable to the authors concerned, offer a view of the types of situations facing the writers/journalists who ask for our help. They show the necessity of the fund, sometimes in a disturbing way. Also as a result of isolation and impossibilities related to the Covid-19 pandemic, we received more desperate reactions than ever before. What stands out in particular is the hardship experienced by female authors worldwide.

Case 1

We received a letter from a writer/human rights activist whose living circumstances are poor and who awaits placement via ICORN. He needs 'emergency assistance'. Because he received a grant from us a year ago, we are familiar with his case. The subjects that he writes about include the subjugation of women, humanitarian disasters as a result of wars, the sexual abuse of children in religious educational

institutions and the oppression of a minority group in his country which has now led to a massive surge of refugees. His situation has not improved since he was previously granted the maximum amount of assistance. He writes:

First of all, I would like to thank you for your sincere support during my worst time as a human rights writer and (...).Your previous grant gave me a lot of relief and the courage and strength to survive at that time.

In this situation, I am compelled to seek your help again.

He has serious physical problems as a result of having kidney stones as well as a Covid infection. The countless death threats from extremist religious groups force him to remain in hiding. The government provides him with round-the-clock security, which did not prevent several incidents from which he managed to escape:

'I still have to hide in my own house. And I have to live an inhuman life with my newborn child and wife'. He is ashamed of asking for our help again: I know you help many endangered human rights activists around the world. There is a pressure on you to help everyone. So I would not ask for help again if I was not compelled. I am embarrassed to reapply for the grant. But without your help, my family and I will not be able to survive. I am again asking for some financial help.

In consultation with the Priority Team Writers at Risk, the day-to-day board decided to grant a second gift.

Case 2

For years a poet contributed to literary magazines, newspapers and online magazines and published two books, one of which was illegal. She fell into disfavor with the government of her country by openly criticizing the strict legislation in her country with regard to women's rights. A newspaper that she was working for was banned, and its publisher was arrested and prosecuted. During a demonstration against the oppression of women in her country, she was arrested and held for questioning. She was prohibited from publishing. Later she found work in a restaurant, where she also organized cultural events. After declining a marriage proposal from the owner,

he turned against her and abused her. He threatened to publicize the fact that she had published an illegal book that goes against the rules of the strictly religious government. Eventually she seized the opportunity to flee to another country where she requested asylum and then obtained refugee status a year later. Her former boss continued to threaten her via social media and managed to find her address. Several times she also received death threats by phone, which has caused her to keep moving to a different address ever since. She lives alone in the country to which she has fled. The Covid pandemic and restrictions related to this have worsened her mental and physical condition. As a refugee she may not leave her city, nor may she work, and her savings are used up. The UNHCR has not been able to find shelter for her in third country. The money granted to her by the fund is mostly going toward living expenses and medication.

Case 3

A writer/activist for women's rights wanted to divorce her violent husband, who had mental disorders and a drug addiction and who severely abused her. She asked her brothers to help her flee, but they threatened to kill her if she would do that. By sharing her story anonymously on the Internet, she became a source of information for young women and helped other endangered women to find shelters. When her husband discovered her identity and her brothers began to look for her, she fled to a safer place with her children. Because of the Covid crisis, she was unable to find work and depended on the financial support of others. Her brothers then threatened to kill one of her sisters if she did not return. With the money provided by the fund, she would travel to a safer country. But on 10 October we were sent heart-wrenching photographs that showed that her youngest daughter had suffered extremely serious burns. We were not told what the cause of this was. The money provided by the fund was used to pay hospital bills. Shortly thereafter she contacted us with the unbearable news that her little daughter had died and that she was completely confused, in an intense mental crisis. Her situation is the result of continual threats

from her family, to such a degree that communication with her is not possible at the moment. A friend is helping her to get in touch with an organization that offers temporary shelter to women in her situation.

Case 4

A journalist/human rights activist earned her Master's degree at a university, in a study where she adopted standpoints that clashed with those of an extremist religious group in her country. She worked for a variety of media and became a well-known source of advice for girls and women who did not dare to speak openly about problems experienced by women. This led to various threats and several assaults. The situation escalated with an attack by armed men on a motorbike who struck her to the ground and wanted to shoot her. The arrival of another car prevented this from happening. Since then she has stopped her activities in public life and has remained at home with her children as much as possible. When the extremist group that had threatened her previously came to power in her country, she fled to a neighboring country with her children. Her husband was not able to flee and had to remain in the country of origin. Because its financial market has collapsed, he cannot transfer money to her. The younger children, in particular, are very vulnerable and sick right now. She herself pays for all of the medical check-ups, medication and local transportation to the hospital, while she has no other source of income. She is awaiting placement elsewhere via ICORN. The money that we promised her arrived only weeks later, because the bank there would not cooperate and refused to acknowledge that money had been transferred. By way of an international confirmation of the deposit, the money minus the fees could still be sent back and sent to her via a friend. She responds with: *'I really can't thank you for all the efforts and supports I have received from you during these tough times. I should say that Mr. (...) sent us the money and we have received it (...). Now lots of our problems can be solved with this money. Once again, I want to thank you all for your help in this trying time.'*

Case 5

An older, internationally acclaimed journalist/writer/poet, who is a well-known personality in his country, was imprisoned for several years in the past for his work in the field of human rights and freedom expression. After that he was no longer allowed to practice his profession as a lawyer. According to his wife he has been threatened and arrested multiple times since then. In 2019 he was arrested while reporting on a legal process and was beaten by the police officers. A few days later he was released and fined for his behavior during his detention, due to his 'disobedience' and 'resistance'. He refused to pay this fine and was sentenced to one year in prison. He made an appeal, but the court dismissed this, so that he nonetheless had to serve time in prison. There he came down with serious health problems as a result of the conditions in the prison. He undergoes constant personal humiliations, both physical and psychological, and threats due to his articles. The cells are packed (up to twenty-five cellmates in each one), while water and food are contaminated, and there is a lack of proper medical care. He suffers from a skin disease and has lost at least ten kilos. His wife managed to smuggle his notes out of the prison and published them. He is a familiar example of a journalist under attack, who has undergone maltreatment in prison. The coronavirus pandemic seriously endangers the lives of vulnerable older prisoners. The money transferred by the PEF is being used for his medication and sustenance in prison, and for the travel costs of his wife's visits to the prison.

AFTERWORD

At a *PEN Spreekt* gathering held at De Balie (Amsterdam) on 14 November, Vonne van der Meer, former chair of PEN Nederland, presented the book *Zoveel zielen, zoveel zinnen – Werken voor PEN*, containing work of authors who were or are involved with PEN, to PEN Emergency Fund's board. The afternoon revolved around the situation in Belarus and PEF's fiftieth anniversary.

We thank the researchers of the Priority Team Writers at Risk, a team of competent, committed colleagues from PEN International, for the outstanding collaboration.

Without them it would not have been possible to carefully consider our decisions to grant financial aid.

We also owe thanks to the Lira Fonds, PEN Nederland and the Auteursbond for their generous moral and facilitating support of our work. PEN Vlaanderen and PEN Nederland supported us with a major gift. A substantial number of members of PEN Nederland, and others from the literary field and its surroundings, sometimes made surprisingly generous donations. For this we are very grateful to all of them.

Finally we wish to thank Jennifer Clement, the departing chair of PEN International. She repeatedly underscored the importance of the fund and by doing so made the fund a great deal more visible.

On the website of PEN International, a half century of PEF is broadly recalled. See:

<https://pen-international.org/news/fifty-year-of-the-pen-emergency-fund-from-couriers-to-bank-transfers>] en <https://pen-international.org/news/tsitsi-dangarembga-wins-the-pen-award-for-freedom-of-expression-2021>

Job Degenaar, chair

(March 2022)

Translation: Beth O'Brien

PEN EMERGENCY FUND, INCOME AND EXPENDITURE IN 2021*In euros (thousands separated from hundreds by a period)*

	actual 2021 -----	estimated 2021 -----	actual 2020 -----
INCOME			
Contributions from private individuals	15.095	10.000	29.278
Contributions from organizations	20.306	25.000	36.154
Interest	-	-	6
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	35.401	35.000	65.438
EXPENDITURE			
Financial support	53.302	45.000	43.351
Communication, representation	1.195	3.000	944
International consultation	-	3.000	-
Management costs	1.290	1.500	1.252
Office expenses, accounting, bank fees	1.316	1.000	818
	-----	-----	-----
	57.103	53.500	46.365
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Balance	-/- 21.702	-/- 18.500	19.073
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SPECIFICATION*Contributions from private individuals*

To a large extent, from members of PEN Netherlands.

<i>Contributions from organizations</i>	actual 2021 -----	estimated 2021 -----	actual 2020 -----
Lira Fund	10.000		10.000
PEN-centres	8.500		1.074
Foundation Niks voor Niks	-		25.000
Other	1.806		80
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	20.306	25.000	36.154

Financial support

In 2021 we were able to give 35 donations (as opposed to 32 in 2020).

Summarized by country:

5x Syria, 4x Afghanistan, 3x Myanmar, Palestine, Bangladesh, Egypt, 2x Iraq, Iran, Georgia, and 1x Eritrea, Nigeria, Uganda, Ethiopia, Venezuela, Azerbaijan, Morocco, Turkey

International consultation

In general we keep the costs as low as possible, but the nature of the work does require constant international coordination, mainly with PEN International, which includes consultation during and reporting to international conferences.

It was unfortunate that in 2021, as in 2020, because of the pandemic we could not travel at all. The upside is that we saved money.

Office expenses, accounting, bank fees

Bank fees for transferring donations are paid by PEN Emergency Fund and can be high.

Wim Jurg, *treasurer*

(March 2022)

Among the supporters of PEN Emergency Fund are:

lira *fonds*

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