

**Annual 2023**

# pen

**EMERGENCY FUND**



Full name: Foundation PEN Emergency Fund

Adress: De Laïressestraat 125

1075 HH Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Website: [www.penemergencyfund.com](http://www.penemergencyfund.com)

Bank: ABN AMRO Bank

Adress bank: Gustav Mahlerlaan 10

1082 PP Amsterdam, The Netherlands

IBAN: NL97 ABNA 0430 2740 33

BIC: ABNANL2A

*Photo cover: René Appel*

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>I</b>	<b>FOREWORD</b>
<b>II</b>	<b>OBJECTIVE</b>
<b>III</b>	<b>BOARD</b>
<b>IV</b>	<b>INCOME</b>
<b>V</b>	<b>SUBSIDIES AND FUNDRAISING</b>
<b>VI</b>	<b>PROCEDURE AND ALLOCATION</b>
<b>VII</b>	<b>TRANSACTION PROBLEMS</b>
<b>VIII</b>	<b>PRIORITIES</b>
<b>IX</b>	<b>REPORTING ON POLICY</b>
<b>X</b>	<b>FIVE CASES</b>
<b>XI</b>	<b>AFTERWORD</b>
<b>XII</b>	<b>PEN EMERGENCY FUND, INCOME AND EXPENDITURE IN 2023</b>



## ANNUAL REPORT 2023

### I FOREWORD

In a geopolitically unsteady world which is seeing a sharp rise in authoritarian regimes, human rights are under pressure. Undemocratic laws that were introduced for the benefit ruling regimes, sometimes under the pretext of Covid prevention, led in particular to the silencing of critical writers, journalists, politicians and jurists. In these times a fund such as ours has proven to be a basic necessity.

Just as in 2022, the number of relief grants awarded to authors in urgent need amounted to more than fifty. In view of the countless responses that the fund receives from these writers, actual financial aid is often the only way forward to (temporarily) better circumstances. Such support can save lives. Thanks to the national and international support of authors, publishers, PEN centers and private individuals, the fund has been able to keep its head above water this year, despite a considerable deficit. We ask you, in turn, to support us in these difficult times, so that we can continue to offer the help that you have come to expect of us.

## II 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. Writers who use their speeches or publications to support violence or hate toward individuals or groups are, in accordance with the PEN charter, excluded from receiving donations.

### **III BOARD**

The fund's board has four members. The day-to-day board includes Wim Jurg (treasurer) and the undersigned (chair). When important decisions are made, regarding policy for instance, the entire board convenes. This occurs 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) and Rudolf Geel (Netherlands).

#### IV INCOME

The financial provision that the fund must secure for the coming years has shrunk this year, due to the large number of awarded support grants. Thanks to several major gifts, however, the loss has remained limited.

As far as its income is concerned, the fund is entirely dependent upon the goodwill of others. This year, too, we have not been disappointed in this. From within the Netherlands, we have received key support from the LIRA Fonds, as well as very welcome donations from members of PEN Nederland and from other involved parties. From an international perspective we received gifts from PEN Trieste, PEN Melbourne, PEN Suomen (Finland) and PEN Flanders. We are extremely grateful to these contributors. They have made the deficits bearable, in spite of the high number of support grants. Given the uncertain future, however, our financial situation continues to be worrisome.

A heartwarming initiative came from a staff member at a nationwide writers' association. Her preference to have a farewell present given by guests in the form of a donation to the fund received a wide response. Such initiatives by private individuals are very welcome.

## V SUBSIDIES AND FUNDRAISING

For years now, structural provision of subsidies from charitable funds of the government and NGO's is a problem. 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.



## VI PROCEDURE AND ALLOCATION

Our fund grants aid to professional writers, journalists, editors and/or publishers, anywhere in the world, who find themselves in dire need and urgently require money, because of what they wrote or published. The assistance is granted only once to each author. In an unusually urgent case a supplemental amount may be awarded, as an exception to the principle of a once-only gift, if the situation has remained unchanged.

In nearly all of the cases, applications for aid come to us via the executive director and regional coordinators of PEN International, with whom we collaborate closely. Their fields of work are divided into Africa, the Americas, Asia, the Middle East/ North Africa and Europe. They are all experienced researchers who compile the dossiers for us. These people are, in turn, provided information by the roughly 140 PEN centers and other NGOs, such as ICORN, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and Reporters without Borders. Occasionally an author might contact us directly or via a PEN center. In such an instance the standard procedure is to forward the case to PEN International, which completes the application form for the fund with the applicant and verifies it, then returns it to us for potential remuneration. Among the applicants are also writers who await long-term placement with ICORN, the International Cities of Refuge Network, which has more than seventy shelters for refugee writers, mainly in Western Europe.

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.

The awarded grants, a total of fifty-two, amounted to a maximum of 2000 euros per author in 2023. The authors concerned came from Nicaragua, Myanmar, Turkey, Cuba, Egypt, Belarus, Honduras, Serbia, Morocco, Haiti, Bangladesh, Guatemala, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Iraq, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Iran.

In many cases the authors had already fled to a safer country and money was needed for medication, sometimes following physical and/or coercive psychological abuse, and subsistence. What stood out this year were the large number of requests by authors from Nicaragua, where human rights are being violated and where, in late February, hundreds of political prisoners were released and then dropped across the border. In addition, once again, there were a striking number of applications from Myanmar, where the army has been terrorizing dissidents since the most recent coup in 2021. Both countries play minor roles in terms of global politics, but writers and journalists there face major problems. Furthermore, well-known countries such as Turkey, Cuba, Egypt, Belarus and Honduras weren't missing from our lists in 2023.

The countries of origin of the 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). The complete list of the numbers of allocations per country can be found in the specification of awarded aid in chapter XII (PEN Emergency Fund, Income and Expenditure in 2023).

## VII TRANSACTION PROBLEMS

Relatively speaking, there were few difficulties related to financial transactions in 2023. Occasionally it took longer for the money to end up on the bank accounts of those involved. In a number of cases, monetary transactions with the countries concerned were problematic, if not impossible, and we made use of couriers who delivered the money to the people in need from bordering countries. Of the fifty-two authors, fifty-one of them have confirmed receipt of the financial support as of 31 December.

## VIII PRIORITIES

As in previous years, work done behind the scenes to support writers in dire need had the highest priority in 2023. 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. This took place at the digitally organized PEN World Congress, at the General Members' Meeting of PEN Netherlands, in appropriate media and via flyers (Dutch/English) and emailings.

## IX REPORTING ON POLICY

At the General Members' Conference of PEN Nederland on 13 September of this year and during the online 89th PEN World Congress (26 through 28 September) a report on the 2022 management policy was provided, in accordance with the statutes. The first was done orally, with optional access to the document, and the second via the Annual Report 2022, which was issued in English, French and Spanish via the Delegates Pack of the PEN World Congress. On the website [www.penemergencyfund.com](http://www.penemergencyfund.com) the digital version of the annual review has been published in Dutch, according to the rules of the Dutch tax authority, as well as in English.

## X FIVE CASES

The following examples of cases chosen from various continents, which have been anonymized and cannot be traced back to the authors concerned, provide an idea as to the types of situations facing writers/journalists who appeal to us. They show, sometimes in a distressing manner, the necessity of the fund.

1

*The son of an author, journalist and peaceful political/cultural activist, who wrote articles under a pseudonym for fear of reprisals, is taken from his house as a hostage when authorities attempt to arrest his mother but discover that she has, in fact, already fled the country. He is used as a means of exchange. When she does not turn herself in, however, he – a writer and human rights activist himself – is arrested, beaten and sentenced to years in prison. Several months later he is deported, with only the clothes on his back, and stripped of his citizenship. His situation in exile, living in a foreign country without employment or any source of income, is extremely precarious, especially because his wife and children are financially dependent on him. Since his current situation is a direct consequence of his mother's journalistic work, he has been granted a sum to cover the costs of a visa, clothes, food and rent.*

2

*A nationally known author and professor writes satirically on controversial political and social issues in his country. On the first day of a military coup, he is arrested and sentenced to several years in prison as well as forced labor, due to his criticism of the military junta and behavior of the army in some of his literary works. A half year later his sentence is waived and he is released from prison. After that his physical health begins to deteriorate severely, and he proves to have cancerous tumors throughout his body, this resulting in various operations*

*and chemotherapy. Until now his family has been able to pay for his medical care from his savings, built up with his salary as a professor, but the rapidly declining economic circumstances in his country, as well as the fact that he no longer is permitted to use his health insurance, which is controlled by the junta regime, make too great a demand on his family. The fund has granted his family a compensatory sum for medical care.*

3

*A poet, prose writer and translator, being part of an ethnic minority looked upon as second-class citizens in his country, is chief editor of a newspaper and of a cultural magazine as well as a publisher of a great many translated masterpieces of world literature. In recent decades he has been arrested dozens of times without legitimate reasons and then released. For financial reasons he is forced to shut down the publishing house. The situation becomes more dire when he openly advocates acceptance of this minority group's language in certain forms of education, especially after a coup attempt takes place in his country. Two plainclothes police officers threaten to use violence if he continues with his translation projects for the promotion of his people's language and literature. Shortly thereafter he is detained and threatened at a military checkpoint. Because the newspapers in which he publishes his writing are also banned during the state of emergency in his country, his income ceases to exist. Fearing for his safety and fearing the harsh actions being taken against those with different views, he moves to a safer country where, for the time being, he earns a meagre income from his translations of literary works from world literature. This is by no means sufficient for his subsistence however. A grant that he had been receiving from another organization ended, thus putting him in urgent need of financial support for living expenses. The fund is allocating him a supplemental amount.*

4

*A writer, journalist and photographer has, in recent years, been frequently arrested, attacked, subject to death threats and placed under house arrest. He belongs to a group of contemporary artistic leaders advocating modern, democratic reforms and freedom of expression in his country and thereby stimulating young artists and writers, also via an internet news portal. After he attends a cultural event, the security services attempt to run over him with a car and to damage his reputation on social as well as official media. His family is also threatened, with the aim of causing the author to quit his work as a writer and defender of human rights. His friends are requested to make incriminating statements. He has only limited access to the Internet and is continually intimidated, by way of phone calls from private numbers for instance, by state security agents who ask for his location. Despite all of this, he decides to continue fighting for reforms. Due to his criticism of the authorities, he is forbidden to work and must forego income. Having previously been given permission to travel under the supervision of agents, on the condition that he would indeed report to the authorities frequently, he buys, with the help of his partner who also had to flee to another country, an airline ticket to a foreign country. From there he begins a difficult migration route and ultimately arrives in the country where his partner resides, hoping to be reunited with this partner. Because he is being persecuted, the new authorities are cooperating on his request for refugee status. As he currently has no financial support whatsoever, the fund is granting him a sum to cover the cost of medication, rent, food, local transportation and communication.*

5

*A refugee writer, linguist and board member of a writers' organization faces, as an exile in a neighboring country, serious health and financial problems. He has a temporary resident permit. In the recent past he published a book in his home country; in it he discusses the history of his country in a manner that the authorities consider 'extremist'. The sale and distribution of the book are prohibited. Some media even had reports of 'book destruction'. The organizations of which he was a (board) member were also banned by the authorities. His*



*financial circumstances are precarious. Health insurance in the country of exile can only be obtained with a full-time job. Due to his age and poor health he is not eligible for this. The fund's support is being used partly to cover the cost of a joint-replacement operation (which costs the equivalent of 6000 euros) and subsequent rehabilitation.*

## XI AFTERWORD

We owe thanks to the board of PEN International, particularly to its director Romana Cachioli and the regional coordinators, for the outstanding, fruitful collaboration. Allocations of financial aid demand careful investigations of the situations and motives of the applicants. PEN International plays a crucial role in this. And our collaboration with PEN Nederland was, once again, extraordinarily good.

The moral support given this year, too, by the donors and other involved parties, such as PEN Nederland and other PEN centers, the LIRA Fonds and the Auteursbond (the last offering us, again this year, free facilitative assistance) strengthens our confidence that the fund is making an important contribution, worldwide, to improving the destinies of writers and journalists in dire straits. Along with the many, sometimes heartrending responses from assisted writers, we received, in March 2023, these words from Burhan Sönmez, writer and president of PEN International:

*'I know how important this work is and how greatly you manage it.*

*I would like to thank you on behalf of our organisation for everything you have been/are doing.*

*when writers contact me with requests for emergency financial help, I always feel sorry for them, but at the same time I feel content that we have means to help them. I myself, as a refugee in exile about twenty years ago, experienced the same difficult situation.*

*h.g. wells, our second president, wrote in his essay "the rights of man" that our aim is to rescue people from fear. people, he says, should be free from fear of hunger, pain and oppression. I believe, this ultimate aim of good people is being supported and strengthened by you at the pen emergency fund.*

*thank you once again to you and your board members and advisors and all contributors.'*

On behalf of the executive board I wish to thank all of you personally, and by no means lastly – my inspiring fellow board members Wim Jurg, Paulien Loerts and René Appel. We hope that our work can count on your trust in the future as well.

*Job Degenaar, president*

(March 2024)

*Translation: Beth O'Brien*

## XII PEN EMERGENCY FUND, INCOME AND EXPENDITURE IN 2023

*In euros (thousands separated from hundreds by a period)*

	actual 2023 -----	estimated 2023 -----	actual 2022 -----
<b>INCOME</b>			
Contributions from private individuals	9.075	10.000	21.994
Contributions from organizations	35.739	25.000	48.100
Interest	1.538	-	39
	-----	-----	-----
	46.352	35.000	70.133
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>			
Financial support	99.446	60.000	88.081
Communication, representation	1.673	2.500	1.675
International consultation	-	2.500	3.684
Management costs	1.200	1.500	1.262
Office expenses, accounting, bank fees	1.768	1.500	2.068
	-----	-----	-----
	104.087	68.000	96.770
	-----	-----	-----
Balance	-/- 57.735	-/- 33.000	-/- 26.637
	=====	=====	=====

### SPECIFICATION

#### *Contributions from private individuals*

To a large extent, from members of PEN Netherlands.

<i>Contributions from organizations</i>	actual 2023 -----	estimated 2023 -----	actual 2022 -----
Lira Fund	10.000		10.000
PEN-centres	5.740		1.369
Foundation Niks voor Niks	20.000		25.000
Anonymous	-		10.000
Other	-		1.731
	-----	-----	-----
	35.740	25.000	48.100

#### *Financial support*

In 2023 we were able to give 52 donations (as opposed to 55 in 2022).

Summarized by country:

14x Nicaragua, 12x Myanmar, 4x Turkey, 3x Cuba, 2x Egypt, Belarus and Honduras, 1x Serbia, Morocco, Haiti, Bangladesh, Guatemala, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Iraq, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Iran

*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.

In 2023 all international consultation was done through video.

*Office expenses, accounting, bank fees*

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

Wim Jurg, treasurer  
(March 2024)

Among the supporters of PEN Emergency Fund are:

*lira fonds*

**pen** INTERNATIONAL      **PEN**  
NEDERLAND

AUTEURS  
BONDS