

# Annual Report 2024



Foundation PEN Emergency Fund  
Address: De Lairesestraat 125  
1075 HH Amsterdam, Nederland  
Website: [www.penemergencyfund.com](http://www.penemergencyfund.com)

Bank: ABN AMRO Bank  
Bank address: Gustav Mahlerlaan 10  
1082 PP Amsterdam, Nederland  
IBAN: NL97 ABNA 0430 2740 33  
BIC: ABNANL2A

## CONTENTS

I	Foreword
II	Objective
III	Board
IV	Income
V	Subsidies and fundraising
VI	Procedure and allocations
VII	Transaction problems
VIII	Priorities
IX	Justification of policy
X	Five cases
XI	Eight responses from authors supported by fund
XII	Afterword
XIII	Income and Expenditure in 2024



## 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

### I FOREWORD

Things are going well with the fund! This does mean, nevertheless, that free speech is doing poorly. If human rights and, in particular, freedom of expression were respected throughout the world, the existence of the fund would be unnecessary. In countries such as Palestine, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Turkey, Sudan, Nicaragua and Ethiopia critical writers and journalists find themselves in a perilous situation; they are frequently threatened, sometimes facing imminent danger to their own lives.

Over the past year the number of allocated grants of support to authors in urgent need has gone beyond eighty. Just a few years ago, that number was between thirty and thirty-five.

Direct financial assistance, albeit one time only, has proven to be of the greatest importance to writers who need medication, must flee with or without their families, or who are forced to build new lives elsewhere. In some cases this support has possibly saved lives. Thanks to heartwarming national and international support from authors, publishers, members and directors of PEN centers, individual writers and other involved parties, the PEN Emergency Fund has managed, once again, to keep its head above water this year. We owe them our profound thanks.

## II OBJECTIVE

Foundation PEN Emergency Fund – also known as *Stichting Fonds Schrijvers in Nood* – aims to grant monetary assistance to writers and writing journalists, anywhere in the world, who for political or ideological reasons have been robbed of their physical freedom or, in other ways, find themselves in dire need and require temporary financial support. Writers who use their speeches or writings to advocate violence or hate toward individuals or groups are, in accordance with PEN's charter, excluded from receiving donations.

### **III BOARD**

As of 31 December 2024 the board comprised five members: René Appel, Job Degenaar, Wim Jurg, Paulien Loerts and Charles den Tex. Day-to-day management has been carried out, as of 31 December, by the treasurer (Wim Jurg) and the chair (Job Degenaar); together with Charles den Tex they moreover made up the transfer team, responsible for the actual transfer activities.

For important decisions the full board convenes, at least twice per year. The day-to-day management and the transfer team are in constant dialogue. When necessary, advice is obtained from the Advisory Board, composed of 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

As far as income is concerned, the fund is entirely dependent upon the goodwill of others. This year too, we have not been disappointed in this respect. From the Netherlands we received major support from the LIRA Fonds, as well as very welcome gifts from members of PEN Nederland, publishers, individual writers, several commercial institutions and other parties. From abroad we received gifts from PEN Finland, PEN Melbourne, Centre PEN Suisse Romand, San Miguel PEN, English PEN, the American PEN Center and PEN Vlaanderen.

Notable developments included several campaigns of an international character. In connection with Valentine's Day, the English PEN organized the fundraising drive *Valentines4Palestine* with the cooperation of English and Scottish bookstores. The PEN American Center donated a sum for Palestinian writers in need. Both gifts benefited Palestinian authors in need: despite the great difficulty we experienced in reaching them, we were able to provide financial emergency aid to thirteen Palestinian (as well as two Lebanese) authors. Obviously, these projects have not been concluded this year. PEN Vlaanderen also came up with an original initiative: to run the 'Antwerp Ten Miles' with a team of writers in order to raise money for our fund. Also heartwarming was an influential Dutch writer's tip to colleagues, calling for donations to the fund. This resulted in a massive response.

We are immensely grateful to our donors. Our financial situation remains, after all, worrying in view of the future.

## **V SUBSIDIES AND FUNDRAISING**

For years now long-term subsidies, allocated by charitable funds of the government and NGOs, have been a problem for funds like ours. This is partly due to a steep rise in the number of requests. Furthermore, a fund like the PEN Emergency Fund suffers from the fact that a grant provider may not publish photographs, names and facts in the media, since this work takes place behind the scenes and must remain confidential. Publishing information would, after all, put the assisted authors in immediate danger. Their cases are known only to the researchers of PEN International and to us.

## VI PROCEDURE AND ALLOCATIONS

Our fund grants aid to professional writers and writing journalists, anywhere in the world, who are in dire need because of what they have written or published and urgently require money. This relief is granted only one time per author. In rare cases of urgency, a supplemental amount can be granted as an exception to the principle of a one-time donation, when the situation continues to be dire.

In nearly all of the cases, requests come to us via the Executive Director and the Heads of Regions of PEN International, with whom we collaborate closely. Their areas of operation cover Africa, the Americas, Asia, the Middle East/North Africa and Europe. Those who compile the dossiers, along with the applicant, are all experienced researchers; they assess the veracity of information, after which, following approval, the request is considered for remuneration in the context of our mandate. These researchers are, in turn, provided with information by the roughly 140 PEN centers and other NGOs, such as ICORN, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Humanists International and Reporters without Borders. Sometimes an author will contact us directly or via a PEN center. In such an instance, the case will be forwarded, according to standard procedure, to PEN International. 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, primarily in Western Europe.

The construction used by the fund is simple, clear, inexpensive and effective. The board's work is done on a volunteer basis, and no buildings need to be maintained. All of the money coming into the fund goes to the authors in need, sometimes on the very day of the request. Because connections are close due to the minimal number of board members, the fund is able – and that is our great strength – to act quickly. The grants allocated in 2024, eighty-two in total, generally amounted to 2000 euros per



author. These grants went to authors from Palestine, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Turkey, Nicaragua, Sudan, Ethiopia, Belarus, Cuba, Guatemala, Bangladesh, Uganda, Syria, Lebanon, Togo, Ghana, Nigeria, Iraq, Colombia, Serbia, Eritrea, Egypt, China, Ecuador, Venezuela, Mali, Vietnam, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Pakistan, Gambia and Honduras.

In many cases the authors had already moved to a safer country and money was needed for medication, sometimes after physical and/or coercive psychological abuse, and subsistence. Due to the war in the Middle East the number of requests by authors from Palestine and Lebanon was to be expected. Again there were a striking number of requests from Myanmar and Afghanistan, countries overshadowed by world politics, but where writers and journalists do face major problems. The Financial Report (Chapter XIII, *Income and Expenditure in 2024*) contains a complete survey of the number of aid grants per country, in the section *Financial support* (p. 23). This list thereby offers a view of countries in which freedom of expression is seriously under pressure. That is not to say, however, that countries missing from this list *do* have freedom of expression. Some countries just happen to be unreachable.

## **VII TRANSACTION PROBLEMS**

In 2024, too, there were relatively few complications related to the financial transactions, despite the high number of aid grants. In some instances it took a bit longer for the money to arrive on the bank account of the person concerned. Just as every year, the monetary circulation in the country involved was, in several cases, problematic, if not impossible, and trusted intermediaries were used to deliver the money to those in need from neighboring countries. All of the authors confirmed receipt of the financial support.

## VIII PRIORITIES

Just as in previous years, our efforts to support writers in dire need had, in 2024, the highest priority. Furthermore, the distribution of information, both nationally and internationally, was an important aim – which had a dual purpose: to make writers aware of the fund's existence and to draw the interest of potential donors. This took place during the PEN World Congress in Oxford, at PEN Nederland's General Meeting of Members, in the appropriate media, via flyers (in Dutch and English), emails and conversations. Published in the newsletter of *De Auteursbond* (The Writers' Association) was an article about the fund which brought attention to the vacancy 'board member/member of transfer team' due to the major increase in requests for support. In *LIRA-nieuws* the chair was interviewed, and the vacant post was also mentioned.

## IX JUSTIFICATION OF POLICY

During PEN Nederland's General Meeting of Members on 30 July of this year and at the 90th PEN World Congress in Oxford (24 through 27 September) an account of management policy in 2023 was given, in accordance with the statutes. This was initially done orally, with the option of reviewing written information, and in the second instance during and prior to the Assembly of Delegates, by means of the 2023 Annual Report included in the Delegates' Pack, distributed by PEN International in English, French and Spanish. The digital versions of recent annual reports can be found on the website [www.penemergencyfund.com](http://www.penemergencyfund.com), both in Dutch (in compliance with the norms of the Dutch tax authority) and in English.

## X FIVE CASES

The following examples of cases, chosen from different continents, anonymized and made untraceable to the authors concerned for security reasons, provide a rough idea as to the types of situations faced by the writers and journalists who come to us. They demonstrate the need for the fund, sometimes in a distressing way.

### I

*A writer, satirist and journalist – well-known in his country, working for radio and television as well – had been involved in activism against a political superpower and was imprisoned for a number of years. After his release he started a satirical magazine in which he severely criticized a militant group in his country. Publication of the magazine was banned when this group came to power. He went on to distribute it, however, clandestinely; when this was discovered, he and his family had to go into hiding for years. In its final years the magazine had become more general in its intent and dealt with issues such as government corruption and highly restrictive norms for women.*

*As the situation in the country worsened, his friends no longer dared to provide him with shelter, for fear of their own safety, and the family decided to flee to a safer neighboring country. Recently this writer was diagnosed with cancer in an advanced stage. For a number of months he has received chemotherapy injections which have serious side effects that also require medication. The cost of these treatments is far too expensive for the family. Every test must be paid for in advance, and a continuation of the treatment requires additional payments that the family can no longer afford. This is why the family decided, with support from other family members and friends, to appeal to our fund. The money eventually reached them by way of an intermediary.*

## II

*A poet, writer and human rights activist is persecuted by the authorities in his country due to the themes that he explores in his books, which include corruption, social injustice and the human rights of women.*

*After incessant threats it becomes clear that the authorities want to arrest him. He flees to a neighboring country, where he goes underground. There he continues to receive threatening text messages, originating from the security forces of his home country; they say that 'they know where to find him' and that he should turn himself over to the authorities. If he fails to do so, then his immediate family will be punished.*

*Several weeks later he is arrested by the authorities of the country where he resides at the time, because his visa has expired. There he is in danger of being deported to another country. When the authorities hear, however, that he had fled his country due to threats, they drop the charge against him and encourage him to seek asylum. Yet he departs for a neighboring country where he has contacts. There disaster strikes: he is kidnapped by security agents of his home country and brought back there, where he is unjustly detained, mostly blindfolded, severely beaten and tortured. A year later he is recovered, having been dumped along the side of a road, blindfolded, wounded and barely conscious. Again he flees to another country, where he now lives in fear and in miserable circumstances. An artists' organization there is able to offer him temporary accommodation. But they are unable to supply day-to-day subsistence. PEN Emergency Fund is providing him with financial support so that he can, for the time being, build a new life there.*

### III

*An experienced journalist is a freelancer and editor for various news media. He writes about local and national politics and about social conflicts. In doing this he criticizes the military junta in his country and consequently receives death threats; for his safety he must flee, while his wife and children remain at home. The threats, also to his family, become so serious that he goes into hiding with his family in another city. There, too, he must flee once again. The houses in which he lived previously are, meanwhile, extensively searched. Via Facebook he continues to receive threats, resulting in the family's decision to live in a safehouse in his country's capital. A contribution from the fund covers the cost of living, rent and medication for three months.*

#### IV

*Now and then we receive a request for support that leads to a lengthier internal discussion. That is the case with a writer/artist who spent a large part of his adult life in prison, sometimes under extremely perilous circumstances, including cruel torture. Initially, he was meant to be sentenced to death because of his membership, long ago, in a party considered terrorist by his country and due to his politically charged novels of that time, which contained descriptions of cruel torture and ill-treatments that took place in a notorious prison. By way of literature, he considered it his duty to inform his people, who have a long history of oppression, about what has happened there.*

*For decades now he has taken a different, peaceful and democratic course. He strives for the preservation of the language and culture of his people and, in a non-violent manner, promotes solely bonding and peace among the various ethnic groups of his country. His financial situation is highly precarious, because he has lost the right to a pension as a result of his detention and earns little from his writing. As he is not a journalist, he cannot approach media organizations for support. He moreover suffers from health problems. The financial support that he has requested is to be used for emergency aid, medication and basic needs. When it appears that his name furthermore does not appear on sanction lists of the EU, the UN and the UK we decide to support him.*



*A writer/editor/professor, well-known in his country, receives an anonymous call from someone who threatens retribution if he continues to publish his texts. What strikes him is that, in his mobile phone's call history, there is no indication of this call whatsoever. He saves digital copies of the texts from his next book, in which he criticizes high-ranking public, political and military officials, and destroys all paper copies of them. Although the country is internationally required to ensure fundamental human rights, freedom of the press and freedom of expression are taboo; the authorities of his country do searches of homes and telephones, and people who express critical views of the government are arrested. Often journalists are targeted, both verbally and physically. Their houses are shot at, and random arrests take place. He hopes to leave his country with his wife and children as soon as possible, for fear of victimization. He is in need of money and, with help from the fund, can pay the rent and buy food for his family for two months, while awaiting long-term assistance.*

## **XI EIGHT RESPONSES FROM AUTHORS SUPPORTED BY FUND**

From many writers who received financial support from us in 2024, we have had responses like these:

*I am writing to express my heartfelt gratitude for the generous aid I have received. The financial support from PEN International, PEN Emergency Fund means more to me and my family than words can convey, and it has come at a time when it is truly needed. (...) Your assistance has made a significant difference in our lives (...) It is my hope that, in the future, I can pay this kindness forward by supporting fellow journalists who face similar challenges. Your generosity has not only provided immediate relief but has also inspired me to continue contributing to the journalism community in meaningful ways. Thank you once again for your unwavering support.*

(Myanmar)

*I would like to express my sincere appreciation to you and your team for all the support. Your assistance, along with Pen International's, has been invaluable, and I am deeply grateful for it.*

(Afghanistan)

*Hence, I am writing to express my heartfelt gratitude for the emergency grant Pen International provided me during this critical time in my life. The much-needed financial support has enabled me to pay the overdue months house rent and to cover for food and other daily expenses for the weeks to come. In general, the fund grant has given me much relief and renewed hope and confidence in moving forward. I deeply appreciate the commitment and effort of your team in responding swiftly to my desperate request. I look forward to staying connected with your organization and supporting your important work in any way I can. Once again, thank you very much for your invaluable support. Warm regards, ...*

(Ethiopia)

*Thank you SO very much for the incredibly generous PEN Emergency Fund Amsterdam donation that you were able to provide to myself and my work! I appreciate you all so very much for this heart-touching support! (...) I am incredibly grateful for the support you provided me, (...)Your support will enable me to continue doing the vital and necessary work that I do. (...) Thank you (...) so very much once again and pass on my immense gratitude to the rest of the team at PEN Amsterdam! With immense gratitude,*

(Uganda)

*I thank you for your kind assistance and I wish peace for the peoples of the world and for my people who aspire to their freedom.*

(Palestine)

*As always, thank you so very much for all you do! It means a lot. I am (...) in Uganda where (...), who you helped some time ago, is a participant. It is truly moving what PEF means to those it gave respite at their lowest moment. It is totally different speaking with him and listening to what your support meant. I wish you more power, more capacity and growth in the truly needed work you do with rare humility. Thank you!!*

(Uganda)

*I am writing to express my deepest gratitude for the generous support provided by PEN International and the PEN Emergency Fund. The donation (...) is not only a significant financial aid for my family and me, but it also carries an invaluable message of solidarity and hope.*

(Belarus)

*I would like to thank PEN Emergency Fund for supporting me during my most difficult time in Zimbabwe. You played a critical role in my life. You stood by me during my isolation,*

*poverty and peril days. You are a beacon of hope to a world, lost without compassion and empathy. (...) I remain perpetually indebted to you! Best regards, ...*

(Zimbabwe)

## XII AFTERWORD

Thank you, colleagues at PEN International – particularly executive director Romana Cachioli and the Heads of Regions – for the outstanding collaboration in 2024. Grants of financial aid require careful research into the situations and motives of the applicants. PEN International plays a crucial role in this. Thank you LIRA, PEN members, individual writers, publishers and other sponsors for the heartwarming financial *and* moral support which we (again) this year were able to receive. Thanks also to PEN Nederland and Auteursbond for the great collaboration and support, and, not least of all, to my fellow board members for their enthusiasm and unpaid efforts for the fund, which can now offer vital support to conscientious writers who are in dire straits due to their right to free expression.

We ask that you keep on supporting us in these, worldwide, extremely uncertain times, so that we can continue to provide the help necessary to our colleagues who face imminent danger.

*Job Degenaar, chair*

*(March 2025)*

*Translation: Beth O'Brien*

## PEN EMERGENCY FUND, INCOME AND EXPENDITURE IN 2024

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

	actual 2024 -----	estimated 2024 -----	actual 2023 -----
INCOME			
Contributions from private individuals	13.645	10.000	9.075
Contributions from organizations	27.074	35.000	35.739
Interest	2.272	2.000	1.538
	-----	-----	-----
	42.991	47.000	46.352
EXPENDITURE			
Financial support	131.836 *)	90.000	99.446
Communication, representation	1.864	2.000	1.673
International consultation	3.647	2.000	-
Management costs	1.200	1.500	1.200
Office expenses, accounting, bank fees	2.413	1.500	1.768
	-----	-----	-----
	140.960	97.000	104.087
	-----	-----	-----
Balance	-/- 97.969	-/- 50.000	-/- 57.735
	=====	=====	=====

\*) not included is a total of 30.609 covered by special grants from PEN America and PEN England to support Palestinian writers; this special support will be continued in 2025

### SPECIFICATION

<i>Contributions from organizations</i>	actual 2024 -----	estimated 2024 -----	actual 2023 -----
Lira Fund	10.000		10.000
PEN-centres *	6.384		5.740
Foundation Niks voor Niks	-		20.000
Anonymous	5.500		-
Other	5.190		-
	-----	-----	-----
	27.074	35.000	35.740

\*) not including the special grants mentioned above

#### *Financial support*

In 2024 we were able to give 82 donations (as opposed to 52 in 2023).

Summarized by country:

13x Palestine; 9x Myanmar; 8x Afghanistan; 5x Turkey, Nicaragua; 4x Sudan, Ethiopia; 3x Belarus, Cuba; 2x Guatemala, Bangladesh, Uganda, Syria, Lebanon; 1x Togo, Ghana, Nigeria, Iraq, Colombia, Serbia, Eritrea, Egypt, China, Ecuador, Venezuela, Mali, Vietnam, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Pakistan, Gambia, Honduras

#### *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. In 2024 there was an important in person PEN congress.

#### *Office expenses, accounting, bank fees*

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

Wim Jurg, treasurer  
(March 2025)

Supporters of the PEN Emergency Fund include:

*lira fonds*

**pen**  
INTERNATIONAL

**PEN**  
NEDERLAND

AUTEURS  
BONDS