

# Annual Report 2025

**pen**  
**EMERGENCY FUND**



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

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

*Cover photo: René Appel*



## Annual Report 2025

### 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	Five responses from authors supported by the fund
XII	Afterword
XIII	PEN Emergency Fund, income and expenditure in 2025

## FOREWORD

For the PEN Emergency Fund, 2025 was a remarkable year. The number of aid grants awarded to writers in dire need reached a record (84); a board member said goodbye to us; two new board members joined us; and new initiatives related to fundraising were developed and carried out in order to continue financing our activities. The financial buffer that we had long held, and on which we could depend somewhat easily, shrank to an accelerated degree due to the great number of writers whom we were able to offer help worldwide.

We could consider ourselves fortunate to have received the undiminished support of cultural funds, international PEN centers, PEN members, publishers and committed private individuals. Initially somber-looking prognoses were largely able to be adjusted by the end of the year, allowing us to face 2026 with confidence.

After nearly nine years we parted with author and emeritus professor René Appel, who put his strengths and achievements to work for the fund and supported us, in word and deed, from the very moment at which Wim Jurg and I replaced chair Rudolf Geel and treasurer Jan Honout. René's wisdom, expertise, humor and outstanding proposals to phrase things in a slightly different manner have been a tremendous help to Wim and me. The board is extremely grateful and will miss his great commitment and sense of humor.

Newly appointed to the board are author/ art critic/ columnist Lucette ter Borg and translator/editor Henske Marsman, who are a welcome addition in the intensive work that our assessment of and global transfers to authors in need requires.

In 2025 there were several special initiatives whose proceeds were donated to the fund. The fund received prize money granted to an internationally respected author, as well as money generated by a television program about an author (whose portrait was painted); and the fund was chosen for the NRC Christmas initiative, in which

special consideration was given to charities. Thanks to the gifts received from PEN America and English PEN, we were able to support a great many writers in Palestine. Strikingly, there were also many authors from Myanmar who needed support this year.

## II OBJECTIVE

PEN Emergency Fund – also known as Stichting Fonds Schrijvers in Nood – aims to grant monetary support to writers and writing journalists, anywhere in the world, who, for political or ideological reasons, have been robbed of their physical freedom or find themselves otherwise in acute need and require financial aid. Writers who use their speeches or writings in order to promote violence or hate against an individual or group are, in accordance with the PEN charter, excluded from receiving donations.

### III BOARD

On 31 December 2025 the board included six members: Lucette ter Borg, Job Degenaar, Wim Jurg, Paulien Loerts, Henske Marsman and Charles den Tex. The day-to-day board consisted of the chair (Job Degenaar) and the treasurer (Wim Jurg). The 'transfer team', responsible for international monetary transactions, comprised Lucette ter Borg, Henske Marsman, Wim Jurg and Charles den Tex. The make-up of the 'fundraising team', concerned with new fundraising activities, and the 'recruitment team', which seeks new candidates for the board, alternated depending on the time and circumstances. On 24 September we bid farewell to René Appel and welcomed Lucette ter Borg and Henske Marsman to the board. And because the nine years of service by the extraordinarily capable treasurer and co-founder of the fund in its present form, Wim Jurg, had passed on 31 December, we also had to take formal leave of him.

When important decisions are involved, the entire board convenes, at least twice a year. The day-to-day board and the 'transfer team' are in constant consultation. If necessary, advice can be sought from the Advisory Board, which includes 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

Where income is concerned, the fund is entirely dependent on the goodwill of others. Again this year we have not been disappointed in this respect. From the Netherlands we received major support from the LIRA Fonds, P.C. Boutensfonds, Van Vlissingen Art Foundation, PEN Nederland and from several publishing houses, individual writers and other involved parties.

Coming from abroad were very welcome gifts from PEN Canada, Svenska PEN (PEN Sweden), Suomen PEN (PEN Finland), Centre Suisse Romand P.E.N. (French-speaking PEN Switzerland) and San Miguel PEN. Due to the donations from the American PEN Center and English PEN made in 2024 for the benefit of Palestinian authors in need, we were also able to provide support for these authors in 2025. A private initiative was started by two Dutch authors, who wanted to earn money for the fund via a well-known television program, but who, despite playing very well, unfortunately missed out on winnings. Such initiatives are extremely welcome.

We are immensely grateful to our donors. Without them, the fund cannot exist. Our financial situation remains, in view of the future, a constant source of concern.

## 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 is affected by the shortcoming that a grant provider may not publish photographs, names and facts in the media. The work takes place behind the scenes. This must remain so. Publishing information would, after all, put the assisted authors in 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 provided as an exception to the principle of a one-time donation, should the situation remain acute.

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, Southeast Asia/Pacific Ocean, the Middle East/North Africa and Europe/Central Asia. Those who compile the dossiers, together with the applicant, are all experienced researchers; they assess the veracity of information, after which, following approval, the request is considered by us for possible remuneration in the context of our mandate. Nowadays, the rise of AI and its abuse makes it necessary to use even more diligence when checking applications.

These researchers are, in turn, provided with information by the 128 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 2025, eighty-four in total, generally amounted to 2000 euros per author. These went to authors from Palestine, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Turkey, Belarus, Egypt, Cuba, Mexico, Sudan, Nicaragua, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Morocco, Yemen, El Salvador, Georgia, Zimbabwe, Ukraine, Mozambique, Bolivia, Eritrea, Syria and Guinea Conakry.

With all of the authors who submit an application, there is a check to see if they appear on a sanction list of the European Union, the United Kingdom or the United Nations. This was not the case with any of the authors to whom assistance was granted. The same can also be said of the trusted individuals who, in several cases, were engaged in order to ensure that the money would reach the authors. All of the authors have confirmed receipt of the aid.

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 was considerable this year. A striking number of requests came from Myanmar, a country overshadowed by world politics, but where writers and journalists face major problems. A relatively high number of applications also came from Afghanistan and Turkey.

Section XIII, *PEN Emergency Fund, Income and Expenditure in 2025*, contains a complete survey of the number of aid grants per country. This list offers an impression of countries in which freedom of expression is under pressure, sometimes to a serious degree. 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

Once again in 2025, 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, usually from neighboring countries.

## VIII PRIORITIES

Just as in previous years, our efforts to support writers in dire need had, in 2025, the highest priority. Furthermore, the distribution of information, both nationally and internationally, remained an important aim, with a dual purpose: to make writers aware of the fund's existence and to draw the interest of potential donors. This took place during meetings of PEN and other gatherings that focus on freedom of expression, in the appropriate media and via flyers (in Dutch and English), emails and conversations. In February an interview with the chair was published in *Lira Nieuws*. In October, in *Boekblad*, an appeal was made to publishers to support the fund. Fundraising and the search for new board members, in view of approaching term limits, were also defining aspects for this year.

## IX JUSTIFICATION OF POLICY

During PEN Nederland's General Meeting of Members on 2 July of this year and at the 91st PEN World Congress in Krakow, Poland (from 2 through 5 September) an account of management policy in 2024 was given, in accordance with the statutes. This was initially done orally, with the option of reviewing written information. In the second instance, the PEN Emergency Fund Annual Report 2024 was included in the Delegates' Pack and distributed by PEN International in English, French and Spanish during the Assembly of Delegates. The chair also gave an oral report during the Assembly. 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**

#### **ASIA**

Several years ago a journalist – active in a range of (frequently international) news media, including newspapers, radio and television – fled to a neighboring country due to her fear of reprisals; there she wrote, as a freelance journalist, about the poor conditions for asylum seekers coming from her country. Because of the worsening situation in the country where she now resides, the government there has set up a massive deportation program; and now she faces a great risk of being sent back to her native country. She and her young daughter could become victims of direct and indirect repression in that homeland, due to her professional activities and her gender. Together with her family, she is now trying to move to a safer country. Her circumstances have had a serious impact on her mental health; this includes attempts to commit suicide. Recently, by way of a humanitarian organization, she obtained a visa for residence in a Western European country. However, she lacks the financial means to book a flight to the destination. A standard PEF subsidy of €2000 covers roughly two-thirds of all the costs. From another fund she can receive a supplemental amount, thus providing her with enough money to cover the cost of flights and the required documents. We did not hesitate, of course, to have this sum delivered to her via a trusted intermediary.

2

## **MIDDLE EAST**

A young poet/writer, whose work has been translated into English, French and Swedish and published in many countries, lives in a war zone in which bombardments take place constantly. With his debut, in which he describes the war situation, he won a literary prize. He and his family suffer from malnutrition, countless forced displacements, the destruction of their house and personal belongings, including his large private library, and the loss of income. He is the only breadwinner in the family, which comprises his older father and mother and younger brothers and sisters. There is no adequate access to food, clean water, health care, the Internet or electricity. His legs were hit by shrapnel, and he cannot recover from this due to a lack of proper medication.

His account on social media, in which he describes the day-to-day circumstances of the war, was blocked. When he had to flee, he also lost his laptop and, as a result, part of his unpublished work. Psychologically, the war has had a devastating and traumatic impact on him and his family, who have witnessed attacks, fatalities and the loss of loved ones.

He no longer has a steady income and urgently seeks financial aid in order to pay for rent, food, water, medication and other essential needs for his family. A sum of € 2000 has been transferred to him.

3

## **EUROPE/CENTRAL ASIA**

An outstanding linguist, philologist and translator had, for decades, been a lecturer at a university, specialized in a Western European language. She was fired due to her participation in peaceful protests. Subsequently she was arrested and imprisoned on the basis of fabricated administrative accusations, disruption of public order and the promotion of extremist activities.

She wrote various text books and dictionaries and translated literature. She also published writings about the situation in her country in foreign media. Her support for peaceful student initiatives and condemnation of actions by the police led to her arrest and imprisonment. The court deemed her guilty and sentenced her to prison for several years. A short time ago she was granted clemency and was forced to leave her country, without her family or an income. She had to leave behind her elderly mother, for whom she cared. Now she lives in a refugee camp in a neighboring country, is looking for a rental home and trying to obtain a residency permit. She has not applied to any other organizations for help. The maximum amount that can be granted was submitted to her via a trusted intermediary. The money is being used for basic sustenance in the new country, where she is trying to build a new life.

**4**

## **AFRICA**

A journalist and authority in the field of IT has worked for various state-owned media (newspapers, radio, television) for over a decade. In his country journalists employed by the state-owned media are easily subject to repression. For years he has been intimidated and persecuted by the authorities, ever since he objected to forced revisions in his articles and productions that were the part of government's disinformation and propaganda aims. As a high-level civil servant, he had direct access to sensitive information, which put him and his family in danger. On various occasions he was interrogated about his loyalty to the state and had to prove that he had not conveyed any government information to others. For a number of years he was continually watched and threatened and then ended up in prison for a half year, where he heard that he was suspected of 'stealing, keeping and disclosing state secrets', which he repeatedly denied, also after being subject to severe torture. For a brief period he was released on bail, after his telephone and laptop were confiscated and no proof of the accusations was found with him or among his relatives. The bail

period served to put him under pressure to behave loyally toward the government. During that period he travelled abroad for work-related training. He used this trip to flee to a neighboring country, where he requested asylum. There he now lives in hiding, in order to avoid confrontations with the security forces of his country, which is now also active in the country where he resides. He escaped an attack: the driver of a bus attempted to run him off the road repeatedly. Since then he has been living in a more isolated environment and is looking for a safer country, preferably outside of Africa.

His wife, child and parents were dependent on his income when he still lived in his home country. Since he fled he has become financially dependent on his brother in the diaspora, who recently lost his stable job however. Granting support would help him to survive and provide him with the opportunity to investigate options for moving to another country where he can find work, develop his professional skills and live in freedom. He is urgently seeking aid to pay for rent, food and other daily necessities, and has not requested help from other organizations. The board has granted him the maximum sum.

## **5**

### **THE AMERICAS**

A writer/editor/journalist, among the best-known investigative journalists in Central America, has received many major international awards for his work and works for an independent news website which is the target of systematic intimidation by the authorities in his country. Currently he is being prosecuted on the basis of false accusations and has temporarily left the country, fearing for his safety. He writes about the dangers facing migrants, caused by criminal gangs, and the violence gripping his country since a state of emergency has been declared there. This state of emergency puts legal safeguards on hold and makes criminal prosecution without a trial possible. In response to an interview with gang leaders, pro-government officials

and spokespeople accused him of condoning crimes and illegal groups; this was followed by his arrest. His lawyer received no information whatsoever about the charges against him. His exile has led to considerable problems, both economic and emotional. Several other organizations are looking after his interests, though not financially. The wish to return to his home country depends on a risk assessment and the establishment of a solidarity network that can support his return. He urgently needs help to pay the rent and to cover basic living costs. PEN Emergency Fund has provided him with the maximum sum.

## XI FIVE RESPONSES FROM AUTHORS SUPPORTED BY THE FUND

From many writers who were granted financial support from us in 2025, we have seen, in addition to their confirmations of receipt, responses such as these:

### **An author from Palestine:**

*Dear Friends:*

*I hope this email finds you in good health and high spirits.*

*I am writing to extend my deepest gratitude to you for your generosity and unwavering support, not only to me but also to writers who are going through challenging and risky circumstances. Your kindness and solidarity mean the world to us.*

*I am pleased to inform you that the financial transfer has been successfully received.*

*Everything has been processed smoothly. I will attach a copy of the deposit transaction details for your reference.*

*Once again, thank you so much for your kindness and support. Wishing you joyful moments, continued success in your endeavors, and all the best in the days ahead.*

*Warm regards,*

*(...)*

### **An author from Palestine:**

*Dear ...*

*I hope this email will find you well.*

*I apologize for the delayed reply; it was due to an internet outage in my area.*

*The letter I received from you to the bank was accepted, but they asked me to provide proof that I am a writer. (...) I provided them (...) and as a result, they deposited the grant amount into my bank account.*

*I would like to express my deepest gratitude to you for your support and understanding of the difficult circumstances we face. I also wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.*

**An author (refugee) from Myanmar:**

*Dear (...),*

*My sincere apologies for the late reply. I was traveling in an area with very limited internet access, so I could not respond immediately.*

*I am very happy to confirm that I have safely received the €2,000 grant. Thank you so much to you and the entire team for your support and kindness throughout this process. This assistance means a great deal to me. It not only helps me remain safe here in (...), but also gives me the stability to continue my journalism work during a difficult time.*

*I truly appreciate your understanding, patience, and all the effort your team has put into my application. Thank you once again for standing with me.*

*Warm regards, (...)*

**An author (refugee) from Cuba:**

*Saludos amigos:*

*Les informo oportunamente que los fondos ya han llegado a su destino en la cuenta asignada y están disponibles para su retiro.*

*Muchas gracias por su trabajo y todo el esfuerzo de colaboración proporcionado en un momento tan sensible y humanamente necesario.*

*Le saludo fraternalmente desde (...),*

*(...)*

**An author from Turkey:**

*Dear (...),*

*I hope you are well and everything is fine. I sent you an e-mail earlier, didn't you get it? The money you sent has been credited to my account. I want to thank you first of all, and then the whole PEN International team and the PEN International Emergency Fund team.*

*The solidarity and support of PEN International is invaluable to me in these difficult times.*

*Thank you very much. Take care of yourselves. Best wishes, (...)*

## XII AFTERWORD

I would like to thank our colleagues at PEN International with whom we work closely – particularly executive director Romana Cacchioli, the Heads of Region Ross Holder, Mina Thabet, Nduko o’Matigere, Aurélia Dondo and Alicia Quinones, as well as Omnia Farragh Othman – for their extraordinarily diligent collaboration. They did the crucial, thorough research on the need, situation and motives of applicants and put them in touch with us. The donations given in 2024 by the American PEN Center and English PEN were also of critical importance in 2025 for the support of Palestinian writers in need.

Thanks to the LIRA Fonds, PEN members, individual writers, publishers and other sponsors for the heartwarming financial *and* moral support that we were able to receive (once again) this year. Thanks to PEN Nederland and Auteursbond for the fine collaboration and support, and, not least, to my fellow board members for their enthusiasm and commitment.

Finally, my own special word of gratitude goes to Wim Jurg, who thoroughly, competently and transparently managed the fund financially for nine years, and with whom I was able to further develop this now crucial fund.

We ask you to continue supporting us in these globally extremely uncertain times, so that we can continue offering essential help to conscientious writers who face dire problems due to the violation of their right to freedom of expression.

*Job Degenaar, chair*

13.03.2026

*Translation: Beth O’Brien*

### XIII PEN EMERGENCY FUND, INCOME AND EXPENDITURE IN 2025

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

	actual 2025	estimated 2025	actual 2024
	-----	-----	-----
INCOME			
Contributions from private individuals	24.593	15.000	13.645
Contributions from organizations	118.023	40.000	27.074
Interest	760	1.000	2.272
	-----	-----	-----
	143.376	56.000	42.991
EXPENDITURE			
Financial support	121.698 *)	137.000	131.836 *)
Communication, representation	2.984	2.000	1.864
International consultation	1.838	2.000	3.647
Management costs	1.200	2.000	1.200
Office expenses, accounting, bank fees	3.032	2.000	2.413
	-----	-----	-----
	130.752	145.000	140.960
	-----	-----	-----
Balance	12.624	-/- 89.000	-/- 97.969
	=====	=====	=====

\*) not included is the support (30.609 in 2024 and 42.058 in 2025) covered by a special fund filled by PEN America, PEN England and PEN Sweden to support Palestinian writers

#### SPECIFICATION

<i>Contributions from organizations</i>	actual 2025	estimated 2025	actual 2024
	-----	-----	-----
Lira Fund	60.000		10.000
PEN-centres *	18.523		6.384
Publishers	9.500		5.500
Other	30.000		5.190
	-----	-----	-----
	118.023		27.074

\*) not including the special grants mentioned above

### *Financial support*

In 2025 we were able to give 84 donations (as opposed to 82 in 2024, 52 in 2023, 55 in 2022 and 35 in 2021). By country: 21x Palestine; 16x Myanmar; 7x Afghanistan; 6x Turkey; 4x Belarus; 3x Egypt, Cuba, Mexico, Sudan; 2x Nicaragua, Ethiopia, Nigeria; 1x Bangladesh, Morocco, Yemen, El Salvador, Georgia, Zimbabwe, Ukraine, Mozambique, Bolivia, Eritrea, Syria, Guinee Conakry

### *International consultation*

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.

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

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

*Wim Jurg, treasurer in 2025*  
(March 2026)

Among the supporters of PEN Emergency Fund are:

*lira fonds*

