

A close-up portrait of a man's face, heavily shadowed and tinted with a deep red color. The man's features are barely visible, with his eyes and nose appearing as dark shapes against the red background. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of his hair and the contours of his face.

PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE APPEAL FUND

Snapshot of our Work in 2017

10 FAMILIES
REUNITED



126

GRANTS GIVEN
TO PRISONERS
OF CONSCIENCE

AN ADDITIONAL **161**
FAMILY MEMBERS HELPED



EDUCATIONAL
BURSARIES
AWARDED TO **15**
REFUGEES IN EXILE

"It is a long time without telling you my situation. As you know, it is not easy to start the new life. I did never forget how you assisted me. I am totally safe. No fear. Me and my wife have a job and we are still learning English language. We don't have any problem.

I take this opportunity to thank you! I am in safe country. Without your assistance, I would still be in hiding. Thank you very much!"

Munezero, Rwandan journalist in exile in the USA

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Note: * denotes a pseudonym. Prisoners of Conscience takes extreme care to protect its beneficiaries, and their families, many of whom are vulnerable to continued persecution if their identities or locations are made public.

Message from our Director



I would like to thank all our donors for their generous support in 2017, which enabled us to offer vital relief to people at crucial times in their lives - whether they were enduring harsh treatment in prison or arriving as refugees in a strange land, separated from loved ones.

Throughout the year we awarded grants to 126 prisoners of conscience and their families from 26 different countries, totalling £110,246. We also logged an additional 161 dependants, which gives a total of people assisted at 287.

Our grants paid for the most basic essentials, such as food and safe accommodation, but they also paid for family reunion and resettlement costs for people in exile to be reunited with their families, as well as requalification costs to allow professionals to resume their careers.

Once again, we continued our support to many brave journalists in Africa who have been forced into hiding, due to fear of reprisals, while they wait for UNHCR resettlement, which can take years. Your grants are keeping them safe and keeping food on the tables for their families.

I would like to pay tribute to and thank everyone who has shared their stories within the pages of this report, in other literature, and in person at our events over the past year. The courage and resolve they have shown in standing up for their beliefs, at such immense personal cost, is inspiring. Their subsequent generosity in sharing their harrowing stories is humbling.


It is of utmost importance that we continue to support those who are working to make the world a better place. Your donations have been invaluable to people at the darkest of times. We are often told that our grants mean more than 'just money'; that they offer hope and make people feel less alone.

There are many quotes throughout this report that indicate just how valued our grants can be. Ali*, an academic from Ethiopia, and his family, brutally forced into exile, told us, "*The bursary, without exaggeration, meant a life for us*". Nima*, the head of a mental health clinic in Iran, endured two years in prison for her courageous stance against the Iranian regime, said, "*You have been my rock and support*". And Munezero*, a journalist from Rwanda, now resettled in the States told us, "*I am totally safe. No fear.*"

Without the generosity and commitment of our donors, we would be powerless to help anyone. My colleagues and I remain eternally grateful to you for everything you have done, and are continuing to do, for PoC and those we serve.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lynn Carter".

Thank you.



*"I feel 'thank you' is a small sentence and
is not enough, but the support I got from
PoC is immeasurable"*

Relief and Recovery

We are dedicated to helping alleviate the suffering of our beneficiaries in several ways. Often this takes the form of very basic relief to pay for necessities such as food or safe accommodation, but it can also pay for more expensive medical or travel costs.

We are proud of our flexible, humane approach, which enables a rapid response to requests for assistance. Our normal

turnaround time for grant applications is two weeks, but emergency funds can be deployed within 24 hours where needed.

Since we first established electronic records in 1994, more than 10,000 grants totalling nearly £4 million have been allocated to prisoners of conscience and their families in the UK and abroad.

Alex's Story

Alex*, Journalist, West Africa

Alex was a managing editor of a weekly newspaper, known for his reporting on human rights and good governance issues. Because his reporting was often critical of his country's government, he and his family have been regularly harassed by government agents. His paper published an article speculating that the President was compromising the independence of the judiciary. Alex was arrested for his role in publishing the article and was subsequently convicted of spreading false news. He was sentenced to three years in prison, though he was released after a year and eight months.

After his release, Alex relaunched his newspaper. He published an article reporting that a member of parliament had abused her position, after which a defamation case and criminal

charges were brought against Alex and, unbeknown to him, he was tried in absentia. He was sentenced to six months' imprisonment, but remained in ignorance of this conviction until nearly two years later, when he was arrested.

For 48 hours Alex was held incommunicado. When he was finally brought before the public prosecutor, he was merely asked if he had been present for his trial. When Alex denied knowing anything about the trial, he was taken to prison.

While in prison Alex's health deteriorated rapidly. During his previous incarceration he had several heart attacks and he continues to suffer from hypertension. He also suffers from asthma and a serious and ongoing ear infection. A PoC grant contributed towards medical costs, a hearing aid and legal expenses for Alex.

Grant amount: £2,270

Resettlement and Reunion

Over the past 55 years we have been able to reunite over 200 families who have been brutally torn apart due to persecution. In 2017, ten family reunion grants assisted families from Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Iran, Rwanda and Sudan. An average family reunion grant can be in the region of £1,000, but this can vary widely depending on the number of family members and their specific needs.

Often once a family is reunited we may also help with a resettlement grant in the region of £500 to each family to enable them to buy essential items such as school uniforms, furniture etc. In 2017,

30 resettlement grants were allocated in the UK.

While many of the families we assist also qualify for support from the British Red Cross once they actually receive necessary family reunion visas, we have increasingly been paying for the initial DNA testing and translation of documents that is required in order to prove eligibility for family reunion. We are not aware of any other funders who can offer this vital support.

The case below indicates the ongoing and desperate need for the type of humanitarian assistance we offer for family reunion cases.

Abdul's Story

**Abdul*, Health professional,
Middle East**

Abdul was involved in projects in his home country which brought him into conflict with a fundamentalist group. He began to receive various threats which he reported to the authorities, and he was advised on steps to take to ensure his and his family's safety. Although he followed this advice, he received further warnings from the group by letter, and a telephone call threatening him with death.

He travelled to the UK where he was granted refugee status, but had to leave his family behind in a neighbouring country where his baby daughter was receiving urgent medical treatment. He applied to PoC for help to pay the bills for his daughter's medical treatment, and for funds to pay for the family's general everyday expenses while their visa claims for family reunion were being processed.

Grant amount: £500

Requalification – Bursaries Fund

The Bursaries Fund offers grants for post-graduate fees to enable professionals in exile to convert their existing overseas qualifications in order to secure employment on a level commensurate with their skills and experience. Since it was established sixteen years ago, 171 people have been awarded bursaries, totalling £800,000. Past and current recipients include human rights defenders, lawyers, environmental activists, teachers and academics who come from many different countries.

In 2017, we allocated bursaries to 15 successful applicants. Our bursaries are enabling them to gain qualifications in a wide range of subjects, including Law, Medicine, Engineering, Human Rights, Development and Health.



Amira's Story

Amira*, Student, Iran

Amira has been detained multiple times for advocating on behalf of her father who was a high-profile Iranian political prisoner who spent many years in prison.

Although her father has since been released, the family is now being harassed due to Amira's activities. She had always been very active on behalf of her father - reporting and sending films to the Iranian Diaspora. She was detained and interrogated several times and the authorities also blocked her university file, which prevented her from gaining her diploma. Her family is constantly under threat and her father is facing a new trial and new charges, some due to the human rights advocacy work that Amira is undertaking on behalf of political prisoners in Iran.

Amira made the decision to leave Iran for her own safety and has been living in exile

in Sweden for the last few years. Amira had applied twice to PoC successfully in the previous two years to study human rights at a UK university, but was unable to secure the necessary visas to take up the courses. In an exception to our standard bursary guidelines, which normally only cover postgraduate fees, and thanks to a new source of restricted funding we received during the year, PoC awarded funds to help her with her accommodation costs in Sweden while she undertakes a degree in human rights.

Grant amount: £2,400

Amira told us, *"I want to thank you and your organization from the bottom of my heart for your help and support. It helped not only me but my father as well, gave me the feeling that we are not alone. To know there is amazing people who can understand me and my situation and try to help me to achieve my goal was the most beautiful thing that I ever had."*

We believe it is important to evaluate the success of our Bursaries Fund, including analysis of the quality of employment gained. In 2017 we undertook an online evaluation. A total of 60 recipients of bursaries awarded over a ten-year period were contacted. Those that did respond provided very encouraging feedback showing just how life-changing these special grants can be. You can read just a few of the responses below:

"Prisoners of Conscience is the catalyst of change in my life indeed, a 360-degree change."

Aneesah*, Politician/Activist, Pakistan

"The prisoner of conscience bursary transformed my life entirely by helping me to study and obtain the skills and knowledge through which I am employed today and can support my family. It changed my life in a totally dark and uncertain period in UK. I will never forget."

Christopher*, Journalist, Cameroon

"The PoC is a positive and golden force in action today. They help to enrich person's live and thus transform communities by enabling more access for more people to more advance education."

Aaran*, Teacher, Iran

"You have been my rock and support."

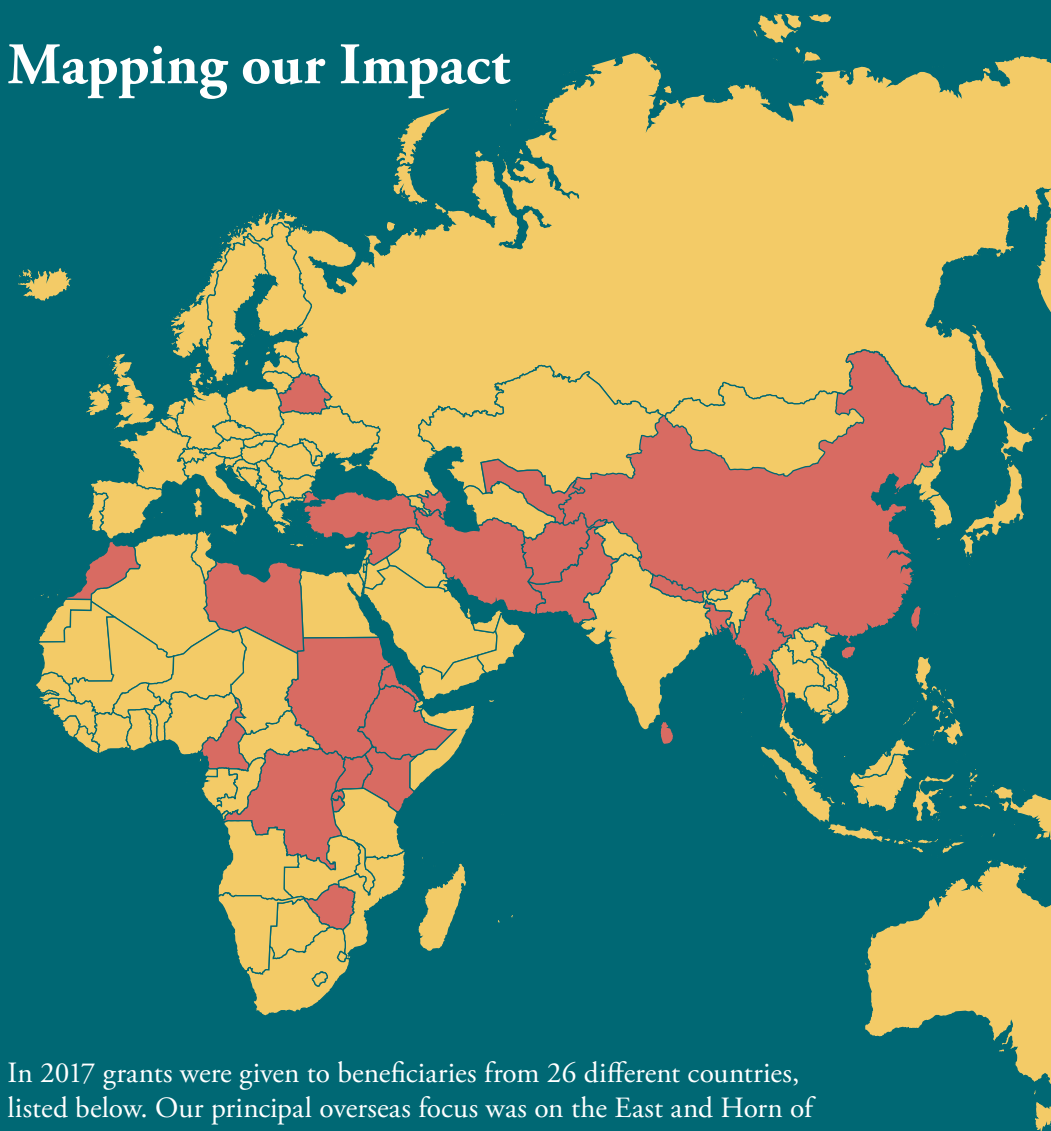
Nima*, Psychologist, Iran

"I am writing this letter to thank you for your kindness and generosity in accepting the relief grant for Karim.*

The grant will immensely benefit and give relief to Karim as it will enable him to attend therapy so that, hopefully, he can begin to move past the atrocities he has endured. He is relieved and grateful for your support. When I first told him, he was lost for words."



Mapping our Impact



In 2017 grants were given to beneficiaries from 26 different countries, listed below. Our principal overseas focus was on the East and Horn of Africa, Burma and Pakistan, but we do receive referrals for prisoners of conscience from all over the world.

- | | | | |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| • Afghanistan | • Cameroon | • Libya | • Syria |
| • Azerbaijan | • China | • Morocco | • Turkey |
| • Bahrain | • DRC | • Nepal | • Uganda |
| • Bangladesh | • Eritrea | • Pakistan* | • Uzbekistan |
| • Belarus | • Ethiopia* | • Rwanda | • Zimbabwe |
| • Burma* | • Iran* | • Sri Lanka | |
| • Burundi | • Kenya | • Sudan* | |

* Denotes top 5 countries of origin by number of grants.



Events in 2017

Bursaries Reception

As in previous years, Prisoners of Conscience hosted an evening reception bringing together students who have received bursary grants, along with staff, volunteers, trustees, patrons and donors. Always an uplifting and moving occasion, our host and patron, Sir Geoffrey Nice QC, presented this year's bursary awards to the very worthy recipients.

In 2017, Prisoners of Conscience allocated 15 bursaries and this reception was an opportunity for everyone to hear the personal stories of some of those people who had received grants in the past.

One bursary holder, an activist and blogger from Iran, had written about judicial corruption in his country for which he was repeatedly arrested and detained, so that he must now remain in the UK for his own safety. He has been able to continue with his research into corruption whilst in the UK.

"I think that if Prisoners of Conscience did not support me – if I had not received that support – emotionally, financially, I could not continue what I have done last year. Therefore, I come to stand here and I just want to say thank you to Prisoners of Conscience and all of you that have supported me and people like me."

Another bursary holder, a lawyer from Nepal, established an organisation in 2001 during a period of armed conflict



Bursary student. Photo - Sophie Baker



Sir Geoffrey Nice QC. Photo - Sophie Baker

in the country. This provided free legal advice as well as documenting over 8,000 human rights abuses and putting pressure on the government to establish a peaceful resolution to the conflict. However, because of her work, she was eventually advised to leave the country for her own safety and remains in the UK.

"I felt guilt when I left my team, my family members and the victims that I worked for, so I wanted to do something meaningful here. Thanks to Prisoners of Conscience for being a part of that."

Our final speaker was a woman from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

"My life was in danger and I had to find a way out. It took me a year to get to the UK and to claim asylum."

It is very difficult to leave everything you have known and start over in an unfamiliar place. This traumatic experience becomes even worse when you have to negotiate a very complicated asylum process that is terrifying.

The grant allowed me to focus on my life goal in the field of human rights and women's rights which I am so deeply passionate about. I would like to thank Prisoners of Conscience for their generosity in helping me fulfil my passion. Your grant has given me the hope that the world can be better. Words cannot express the gratitude I feel for this amazing gift."

As ever, the evening was very generously sponsored by Clifford Chance LLP at their head office in Canary Wharf.

Partners

We are very grateful to the following 36 agencies (nine of which were newly-registered), who submitted successful grant applications in 2017.

- AAPP Burma
- Abdorrahmand Boroumand Foundation
- Action for Refugees in Lewisham
- African Social Health Agency (ASHA)
- Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain
- Article 19, Eastern Africa
- British Red Cross, Glasgow
- British Red Cross, Leeds
- British Red Cross, Liverpool
- British Red Cross, London
- CARA
- English Centre of International Pen
- Free Belarus Now
- Freedom Now
- Homeplus
- Human Rights Focus Pakistan (HRFP)
- Human Rights Watch, East Asia Division
- ICORN. International Cities of Refuge Network
- Institute for Social Sciences & Humanities (Iran Academia)
- Iran Human Rights Documentation Center
- Jesuit Refugee Service UK
- Migrant Voice
- Migrants Organise
- NIACRO
- Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers
- Peace Brigades International, UK Section (PBI UK)
- PEN Canada
- PENHA
- Refugee Council, East London
- Reporters Without Borders
- Sanctuary
- Terrence Higgins Trust Scotland
- Traumatic Stress Clinic
- Waging Peace (Article 1)
- Welsh Refugee Council, Cardiff
- York City of Sanctuary

“Over the years, PoC Appeal Fund has been a crucial and reliable partner in the effort to reduce the suffering of prisoners of conscience. This organization is there for our clients and their families, providing badly needed support to them in their darkest hours.”

**Maran Turner, Executive Director,
Freedom Now**



FREEDOM NOW

Freedom Now is a US-based non-profit, non-governmental, and non-partisan organisation that works to free individual prisoners of conscience through focused legal, political and public relations advocacy efforts.

www.freedom-now.org

“The lives of religiously persecuted are changed with the support of PoC and a ‘hope is awakening’ for a society free from prejudice and discrimination, where everyone can have equal access to opportunities and justice prevails regardless of color, gender, race, faith, religion and sex.”

**Naveed Walter, President,
Human Rights Focus Pakistan**



HUMAN RIGHTS FOCUS
Struggling For Peace, Empowerment and Self Reliance

Human Rights Focus Pakistan works for the fundamental rights of women, children and religious minorities to enable them to live a dignified life.

www.hrfp.org



Statement of Financial Activities

for the year ended 31 December 2017

Summary statement of financial activities

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Designated Funds	Total 2017	<i>Total 2016</i>
INCOME:	£	£	-	£	£
Donations and legacies	191,576	92,619	-	284,195	334,905
Other trading activities	-	-	-	-	1,397
Income from investments	54	-	-	54	163
TOTAL INCOME	191,630	92,619	-	284,249	336,465
EXPENDITURE ON:					
Raising funds	60,148	-	-	60,148	58,275
Charitable activities	141,345	88,351	-	229,696	271,875
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	201,493	88,351	-	289,844	330,150
NET INCOME/ (EXPENDITURE)	(9,863)	4,268	-	(5,595)	6,315
Transfer between funds	2,175	(2,175)			
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS	73,950	10,325	60,000	144,275	137,960
Total funds brought forward at 1 January 2017					
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD AT 31 DECEMBER 2017	£66,262	£12,418	£60,000	£138,680	£144,275

Balance sheet at 31 December 2017

	2017	2016
FIXED ASSETS	£	£
Tangible assets	-	320
CURRENT ASSETS		
Debtors	16,273	18,112
Cash at bank and in hand	153,130	191,424
	169,403	209,536
CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within one year	(30,723)	(65,581)
NET CURRENT ASSETS	138,680	143,955
NET ASSETS	£138,680	£144,275
RESERVES		
Unrestricted funds	66,262	73,950
Designated funds	60,000	60,000
Restricted funds	12,418	10,325
	£138,680	£144,275

The summary financial statements are extracted from the independently examined financial statements. The opinion on the full financial statements was not qualified and they were approved by the trustees on 27th June 2018 and submitted to the Charity Commission during July 2018. Copies of the full financial statements, including the independent examiner's report, can be obtained by written request from the charity's registered office: PO Box 61044, London SE1 1UP



Ansel Wong
Chair



Alison Ward FCCA
Independent Examiner

Our Funders

We fundraise throughout each year to raise the income to support all our activities. Our two principal sources of income are charitable trusts and individual donors in the UK. Although many give regularly, very few give confirmed pledges in advance, so we have to write regularly to each of our donors.

Donations from individuals amounted to £107,891 in 2017. We also benefited from the generous support of 50

Prisoners of Conscience aims to never turn away one single eligible person. To find out more about how to make a donation, go to:

www.prisonersofconscience.org/donate

different Charitable Trusts totalling £139,679 and received £32,430 in legacy income.

We are very grateful to the Sigrid Rausing Trust who awarded an unrestricted grant of £15,000 in December 2017, which will go towards core costs and IT infrastructure development.

Our People

Staff

Lynn Carter, Director
Kirsty Bennett, Grants Officer
Rachael Tyndall, Administrator
Kathy Moss, Accountant

Volunteers

Sophie Baker
Sean Brazier
Izzi David
Kathy Moss
Aftab Mughal
Natallia Paliakova
Rosie Quirke
Jane Seal
Nicola Spurr
Rob Thompson

Trustees and Patrons

We are fortunate to be supported by a group of highly skilled and committed trustees (formally known as the Directors of our Corporate Trustee):

Ian Baker (Treasurer)
Dr Lynn Bindman
(appointed July 2017)
Victoria Brittain
Dorothy Connell
John Cooper QC
Stefanie Grant
Roger Harrison
David Ivy
Catriona Jarvis (Chair)
Maria Saro-Wiwa
Ansel Wong

In addition, we continue to benefit from the support of many eminent patrons:

Rt Rev Simon Barrington-Ward KCMG
Sir Louis Blom-Cooper QC
Sir Henry and Lady Brooke
Lucy Chandler OBE
Rt Rev John Crowley
Dame Judi Dench DBE
Lady Antonia Fraser DBE
Roger Graef OBE
Prins Gunasekara
Rosamund Horwood-Smart QC
Kurt and Caroline Jackson
Baroness Helena Kennedy QC
Bruce Kent
Neil Latchman
Caroline Moorehead OBE
Sir Geoffrey Nice QC
Rabbi Julia Neuberger DBE
Jonathon Porritt CBE
Lord David Puttnam CBE
Rev Dr Nicholas Sagovsky
Sir Tom Stoppard OM
Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu
Zoë Wanamaker CBE

"A huge thank you and everyone in Prisoners of Conscience for funding my LLM. I have completed my course and obtained MERIT.

The course has a big impact on my future career, but more importantly, it has widened my understanding of economics and finance. Now I am volunteering at the law centre and had a six-month placement at one of the big corporate commercial global law firms. Soon I will be fundraising for the law centre to provide legal help specifically for refugees.

I wish you all the best and hope to see a world without war!"

**Alia*, Kurdish human rights activist
and single mum**





Prisoners of Conscience Appeal Fund

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