PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE impact report

2020/2021

protect and uphold human rights by positively transforming the lives of prisoners of conscience to enable them to live safe, free and self-sufficient lives

snapshot of our support

in 2020/2021

THIS YEAR,
TOGETHER, WE:

assisted a total of

424

people

made
144
grants

helped approximately
280
additional family members

reunited

5
iamilies including

13

helped 11 refugees in exile to requalify in the engineering, legal, technology, medicine, healthcare, construction, pharmaceutical and human rights sectors

supported prisoners of conscience from 27 countries



"Please thank the donors of Prisoners of Conscience. Please thank them a great deal. Because I couldn't be where I am today if it wasn't for the grant you gave me. It is you who has helped make this happen"

Pam

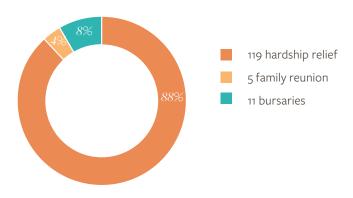
The number of people supported decreased by 5%, notwithstanding a 17% decrease in income

To ensure that funds are only awarded to people who have exercised a, non-violent, act of conscience, every application for support is scrutinised by our Grants and Support Manger, Director and two members of our Trustee Board.

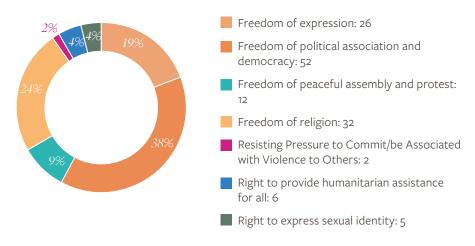
IMPACT AROUND THE WORLD

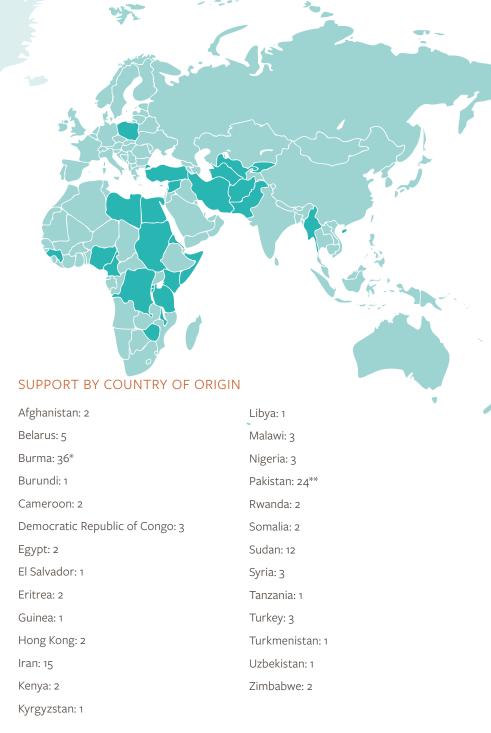
In 2020/21 the prisoners of conscience we supported were from many parts of the world and advocated for a wide array of human rights. These prisoners of conscience challenged corruption by reporting on oppressive regimes, participated in protests, called for political/legal/social reforms, provided humanitarian aid to those in need and stood up against perpetrators of religious persecution.

SUPPORT BY CATEGORY



SUPPORT BY HUMAN RIGHT INFRINGED





Notes: Burma* - block grant, with thanks to anonymous funder
Pakistan** - restricted funding for religious freedom grants, with thanks to charitable trust funders

Package of assistance and involvement

MORE COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT FOR PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

We have been reflecting on how to make the most impact for those we are able to help. Having received feedback from beneficiaries, we have developed a package of assistance and involvement to assist beneficiaries achieve their long-term needs. While grant-making to relieve the immediate hardship and family reunion needs remains central, we are seeking to use the information we hold and our network of contacts to work with beneficiaries so they can recover from their experiences and can achieve economic independence in their new environment.

Moving towards more holistic assistance has led us to develop an employability panel, a web-based forum, signposting to other organisations and NGOS who can provide practical support and identifying volunteering opportunities at PoC and elsewhere.

This support has benefits to individual beneficiaries and has a wider public benefit, because it helps prisoners of conscience

deliver on their goals of being independent and productive members of the society in which they are now living.

By the end of the 2020/21 financial year, 26 prisoners of conscience had requested this practical support in addition to grants received by them. It is anticipated that the demand for these elements of practical assistance will increase in future years.



The overall package that PoC can offer to its beneficiaries includes the following elements:

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

PoC provides rapid financial assistance by way of grants to ensure immediate relief, resettlement and requalification at the time of greatest need.

SIGNPOSTING TO OTHER NGOS

We provide signposting to other NGOs whose services, such as therapy, legal, technology, refugee assistance and integration and human rights campaigning, may be helpful to them.



EMPLOYABILITY PANEL

We have launched an Employability Panel of trusted, specialist organisations who may be able to assist our beneficiaries to find meaningful, skills-related employment.

POC ALUMNI FORUM

PoC has launched a Prisoners of Conscience Alumni Forum. This is a secure platform where PoC beneficiaries can share messages, thoughts and experiences. It will be a safe space to share information, promote integration into UK society, and to improve employment and study prospects.

VOLUNTEERING FOR POC

We welcome beneficiaries who are interested in our work and are keen to gain valuable experience in a human rights organisation to volunteer for PoC and help us achieve more for prisoners of conscience in need.

We are also fortunate in having former beneficiaries serve as trustee board members, drawing on their expertise and personal experiences to help us achieve greater transformation for prisoners of conscience.

COLLABORATING WITH OTHER NGOS

We work with over 50 other NGOs to amplify the voices of prisoners of conscience and help uphold and protect human rights around the world.

"It is your financial support of me and my family that makes me work with you and the POC with energy and enthusiasm. I have always thanked your organization for the support, and I now directly appreciate the team"

Kourosh

POC VOLUNTEER, JOURNALIST AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER IN IRAN

Director's message

What a challenging year it has been. Prisoners of conscience across the world, including refugees and asylum seekers in the United Kingdom, have bravely battled to uphold their and others' human rights. We thank you and are indebted to you.

This is exemplified by the recent passing away of a past beneficiary, Tesfagiorgis Habte Kelati, from a Covid-related condition. Tesfagiorgis had worked as a journalist in Eritrea and, following articles on various human rights issues, he and colleagues were arrested. He spent 4 years in detention without trial, following which he fled Eritrea to Angola, Sweden and finally to Uganda where he passed away. We pay tribute to Tesfagiorgis's bravery and human rights endeavours and our condolences to his surviving wife, Alem, and children.

Without the continuing generosity of our donors we would have been hard-pressed to meet the extent of need. Support for prisoners of conscience fell by 5% as against a reduction in income of 17% during the pandemic. Thank you for the remarkable support of our individual and charitable trust donors and to our staff, trustees and patrons for your determined efforts to serve prisoners of conscience.

PoC collaborated with 25 referral/partner agencies in the UK and overseas. We rely on their experience and integrity and are grateful for their support, particularly given the pandemic-related constraints which they faced over the last year. As they struggled to reach and make applications on behalf of prisoners of conscience, we decided in early 2020 to encourage more direct applications, ending the year with a quarter of all beneficiaries having directly applied to us for assistance. With added due diligence and scrutiny of applications, we are confident



that we can reach ever more deserving people in the future.

In 2020/21, we distributed 144 grants totalling £93,294, which also assisted an additional approximate 280 dependants, giving a total of people assisted at 424. Given our reduction in income during the pandemic in 2020/21, the corporate trustee is of the opinion that this is an acceptable performance, particularly in light of the additional practical support provided to prisoners of conscience.

Following the successful move to homeworking in early 2020, we decided to exercise a lease break and move to an office-less work environment as from April 2021. This is proving to be a success with appropriate risk management, processes and record-keeping in place, and has resulted in office-related expenses being diverted to support for prisoners of conscience.

As to the future and as human rights continue to be threatened across the world, we have ambitious plans to expand our donor base and income so that we can more closely meet the extent of need. Our matching funds campaigns, with thanks to our pledged funds donors, continue to grow. With your support, we can do so much more for so many more brave and resilient people who protect their and, in turn, all our human rights.

Gary Allison

DIRECTOR

gary@prisonersofconscience.org

020 7407 6644

Chair's message

Prisoners of Conscience has a long line of distinguished Chairs and I was honoured to be asked to help lead the organisation through its next phase. It is a privilege to lead a Board of Trustees where everyone makes a contribution and where my colleagues show time and again that they can work highly effectively as a team.

I must pay special thanks to our small team of staff, led by Gary Allison. The commitment and effectiveness of Gary, Joanna, Kirsty and Klajdi is far more than the Trustees could ever ask for and shows how the whole organisation has the interests of our beneficiaries right at the centre of everything we do.

It is an understatement to say that PoC does important work. The organisation's support to its beneficiaries can make all the difference, both in the UK and abroad. Every lawyer knows that "laws" are useless unless they can be enforced. Equally, theoretical human rights are worthless in practice unless they are respected by governments, which almost always needs someone who is prepared to stand up for the human rights of others. Those who draw attention to human rights failings and shortcoming prick the conscience of a society. However, too often those in power who are failing to respect human rights respond to challenges by blaming and persecuting the messengers. PoC exists to provide support to those who have stood up for human rights and paid the price – and the price is often huge as those with a conscience are separated from their home countries, their families, their way of life and their economic security.

The more funds we have, the more PoC can help rebuild shattered lives by assisting those who stand up for the human rights of others. Human rights are more important than ever and the work PoC does to support those who stand up for human rights has never been more important.

David Lock QC CHAIR OF THE TRUSTEE BOARD

8

Lives transformed

REQUALIFICATION

Alazar's story

Alazar, an engineer and activist from Eritrea, was detained and tortured simply for doing the right thing: standing up to injustice.

Back in Eritrea, Alazar was involved in various projects concerning energy and climate change. Everything changed the day he was asked to re-direct money from a carbon fund to government officials. Alazar refused to be an accomplice to the government corruption, and instead reported the incident to a third-party verifier organisation. A few days later, as Alazar was on his way back from work, a car suddenly pulled up in front of him and took him by force. He was taken to an unknown location where was detained and tortured for 6 months. As soon as he was released, Alazar knew that he had to escape.

His journey to the UK was long and treacherous, crossing borders by foot and overloaded inflatable dinghies, escaping border patrols, and sleeping on the streets. This caused him much psychological trauma and distress, which he struggled to cope with. Alazar arrived in the UK with nothing. 'Arriving in the UK isn't the end of that difficult journey. In many ways it's the beginning', he said.

'I had a lot of success back home, I was on the top of the mountain and then ended up in the bottom of the valley but I tried to overcome all those challenges. I decided that



I had to study, pursue a professional career and change my dreams. I got accepted by 4 universities and was looking for funds. I owe to PoC because they made my dreams come true, because if I hadn't received that support I wouldn't have been able and encouraged to move to the next stage, and then the next, which means I would be in a situation of living a life that I don't deserve to live.'

Thanks to the support of our donors, Alazar was able to complete his MSc in Biomedical Engineering and is now working as a Medical Engineer with the NHS. 'As a health professional I was giving back and contributing to the people who gave me asylum and the people who gave me a place to live in. In this Covid challenge I was delivering my maximum potential, working extra hours to make sure I am contributing something'.

RELIEF AND RECOVERY

Yuzana's story

Yuzana* is a writer, surgeon and a founding member of PEN Myanmar. She is a dedicated and committed activist who has received numerous awards in recognition of her work, including during her time in detention. She has stood out as 'a leader of strong principles'.

In the early 90's, she was sentenced to 20 years in prison for 'endangering public peace, having contact with illegal organisations and distributing unlawful literature' in connection with her role as a campaigns assistant for the National League of Democracy (NLD).

She was detained in one of Myanmar's most infamous prisons, during which time she was denied access to necessary medical care. After almost six years in detention, Yuzana was finally released on humanitarian grounds, because of her declining health and international pressure.

In the wake of the military coup on 1 February 2021, PEN Myanmar have been continuing to monitor and share information about developments on the ground with the international community, despite significant risks to their own safety and liberty. Several members of PEN Myanmar are among those to have been detained in the months since



the coup, and four poets are among the hundreds of unarmed civilians to have been killed.

Considering the concerns for her own safety and liberty, Yuzana has now been forced to leave her native Myanmar and seek refuge in another country. She has been admitted as a research scholar in one of the world's most renowned universities.

Prisoners of Conscience was able to help Yuzana cover her flights and basic living costs while she is away from home.

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

10

Lives transformed

FAMILY REUNION

Simplice's story

Simplice is a father and husband who worked as a marketing manager for a computer firm in Cameroon. He found himself imprisoned and having to flee Cameroon after peacefully demonstrating against the current government's alleged electoral fraud.

In 2015 he had become a member of the Cameroon Renaissance Movement (MRC). He did some public speaking and was a grassroots activist - distributing flyers and organising meetings. After the 2018 election, Simplice, with the MRC, organised a peaceful rally against government corruption, electoral fraud and for the cessation of war within the northwest and southwest of Cameroon.

"Following these same demands, a second march was organized on June 1, 2019. And it was during this march that I was arrested and tortured for three days then taken to the central prison of New Bell in Douala on July 4, 2019, where I spent about 1 month until the day I escaped to England July 4, 2019."

When Simplice arrived to the UK he contacted Prisoners of Conscience seeking help. We were able to provide him with grants that assisted with the reunification of his family and supported their first steps into a new life.

"I would like... to thank Prisoners of conscience for all the help I received from Cameroon to England. Thanks to this organization, I was able to pay for the plane tickets for my wife and my 2 children, I was able to pay their Covid test fees when they arrived here in England. Even more, I received the aid for the purpose of my integration and for all this I am infinitely grateful to the place of the same people of this organization which does not cease to be at my side when necessary. Infinitely Thank you and may God watch over you so that you can always be a support for us."

We also collaborated with Human Rights Watch, Front Line Defenders and Amnesty International UK for a special webinar on how to protect human rights during the Covid pandemic.

One of the key messages to come out of the online panel discussion was that the Covid-19 crisis is also a human rights crisis, with most of our rights under threat in some way or another. Panelists talked about the extraordinary measures adopted by governments in response to the pandemic, the heightened risk posed to human rights defenders, and the unified and coordinated response needed by all actors of the international community to defend and protect our rights.

AMPLIFYING VOICES AND PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS

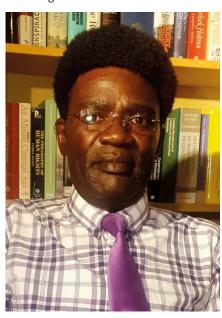
Through our Package of Assistance and Involvement, we aspire to enable those determined to hold fast to their beliefs to continue doing so even after they have been persecuted for speaking up. We help prisoners of conscience share their stories, connect with people, and promote human rights.

In addition to using the PoC digital channels and events as platforms for our beneficiaries to share their stories, this year we also facilitated the interviews of two of our beneficiaries with Refugee Radio, a charity that supports refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants. They discussed human rights, talked about their experiences, dreams and aspirations. Links to the interviews can be found on our website.

Hyab is a researcher, professionally trained psycho-social caseworker and human trafficking expert from Eritrea. He was persecuted by the government and forced into exile for not being willing to compromise and suppress his beliefs.

"The PoC grant made a huge difference in my life. It was a stepping stone for me to pursue my dreams...It's not only about pursuing your dreams, but the ability to be able to engage in life-long ambitions also has healing effects from the trauma that I have experienced before that, so that was one of the things that I value the most; it created a sense of self-worth, a sense of being in a safe space where I can exercise my rights as a dignified human being, so that was one of the things that empowered me the most"

Herbert is a journalist and human rights defender from Kenya. He was forced to flee his home after exposing police violence and human rights violations.



"The assistance by PoC meant that I took a big step in improving career possibilities and I still do not know how I would have achieved this without the PoC grants. Thank you very much and keep doing what you are doing. You change lives and give hope to the hopeless."

Outcomes and Impact

Our first formal outcomes and impact assessment was published in Autumn 2020 and the significant findings are included in the 2019/20 Impact Report**. Overall, the findings of the evaluation were encouraging and helped us identify areas of improvement and revise our theory of change.

The assessment was externally audited and drew the following comments by Southwark Community: "The report evaluation produced by PoC is thorough and of a high quality. The findings are evidenced and the recommendations are reasonable and appropriate. There is a clear desire for excellence."

We have since evolved to the provision of a more holistic and practical assistance framework to deliver support tailored and specific to each beneficiary's needs. By working together, we help to craft their personal development plans and assess what aspects of our Package of Assistance and Involvement might be useful. Through constant communication, feedback and improvement we capture what assistance is and is not useful to help our beneficiaries reestablish their lives in dignity and safety.

In 2020 our research focused on the Covid-19 pandemic. Our survey indicated that prisoners of conscience are disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Human rights defenders often live on the fringes of society, in hiding or in exile or in detention. They have restricted access to healthcare and other services, are separated from families and other support networks. These difficult conditions have the potential to leave a severe and lasting effect on the mental, physical and economic well-being of people who may have already

experienced considerable trauma and tyranny. Eighty percent of the respondents reported being in extreme need of the absolute basics of life - food, shelter, heating, medicines and clothing, with requests for PoC to step in with support. As an example, T*, a Kurdish-Iranian journalist who was imprisoned, persecuted and whose life was threatened for reporting on human rights abuses in Iran told us:

"Over the past few months, my wife and I had been infected with the Covid-19 virus, and we suffered a lot in very bad conditions for about two months, while no one helped us and government hospitals did not test us, because we did not have health insurance. Despite all this, as you know, we as refugees in Turkey, had no family or close relatives here to help us. And we didn't even have the money to buy medicine."

PoC responded with repeat grants to many prisoners of conscience, including T*, who had been severely affected by the pandemic. We also adjusted our application process to reflect the new covid reality, encouraging beneficiaries to apply to us direct rather than through a referral agency. With many partners and referral agencies suspending their services, beneficiaries were finding it hard to apply to PoC for support and a quarter of the application we received were directly from individuals.



"Prisoners of Conscience gave me a new life and I will forever be grateful. My life and achievement are a testament to the amazing work you do to change lives, offer hope where there is hopelessness, and enable and empower people like me with knowledge and skills which they can use to impact the UK society and beyond."

Victoria*
TEACHER AND ACTIVIST IN ZIMBABWE

Partners and selected funders

Our Partners

We are very grateful to the following agencies, which helped us deliver assistance to prisoners of conscience in need:

Amnesty International

Article 19

Birmingham Settlement

Breaking Barriers

British Red Cross (offices in Glasgow, Birmingham, London, Leeds, Liverpool)

Committee for the Protection of Journalists

European Belarus Foundation

Freedom from Torture (offices in London, Manchester, Birmingham)

ivianchester, bir ming

GARAS

Helen Bamber Foundation

Human Rights Focus Pakistan

Human Rights without Frontiers

Human Rights Watch

ICORN

Migrant Voice

NIACRO

RAGU

Refuaid

RAGU (London Met Uni)

Reache NW

Reporters without Borders

Authors League Fund

YOPOC

Zimbabwe Exiles Forum

Zimbabwe Peace Project

Our Funders

We fundraise throughout each year to raise the income to support all our activities. Our three principal sources of income are charitable trusts, individual donors and legacies. With thanks to all our funders, which include:

Allen Charitable Trust Lindsay Foundation

Berni Charitable Trust

Oakdale Charitable Trust

DG Charitable Settlement

Pat Newman Memorial Trust

Eleanor Rathbone Charitable Trust

Roger & Ingrid Pilkington Trust

Eric and Leila DaCosta Fund Alan and Babette Sainsbury Charitable Fund

Ernest Hecht Charitable Trust Silicon Valley Community Fund

Evan Cornish Foundation Souter Charitable Trust

Gordon Fraser Charitable Trust

Thornton Foundation

Hollick Family Foundation Topinambour Charitable Trust

Joffe Charitable Trust Treeside Charitable Trust

Jusaca Charitable Trust Troutsdale Charitable Trust

Kel Trust WGFJM Charitable Trust

Law Society Charity

for their immense generosity which has enabled us to lift the scale of our activities to support prisoners of conscience.

"RefuAid are proud partners of Prisoners of Conscience, who offer vital financial support to our clients for a range of different needs. This support offers a lifeline to individuals who are often in precarious financial and personal situations, thereby alleviating pressure and allowing them to focus on pursuing their goals - whether this be higher education, family reunification or re-qualification. Working with PoC is straightforward, efficient and enjoyable; the team are very professional and personable, so our partnership continues to go from strength to strength. We look forward to continuing our collaboration in the coming years."

REFUAID

Our People

We are a small team of just four staff members, a freelance accountant and several dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers

Staff

Gary Allison, Director

Kirsty Bennett, Grants & Support Manager

Joanna Pitta, Communications & Transformation Officer

Klajdi Selimi, Communications & Administration Associate

Kathy Moss, External Accountant

Volunteers

Sophie Baker

Glynnis Brooks

Joe Clowsley

Georgia Crawford

Judy Horne

Sophie Howard

Jane Seal



Trustees and Patrons

We were fortunate to be supported by a group of highly skilled and committed directors of the corporate trustee:

David Lock QC (Chair)

Victoria Brittain (Vice Chair)

Diba Alikhani

Dr Dorothy Connell

Justin Glenister

Stefanie Grant

Dr Roger Harrison

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

Rt Rev Simon Barrington-Ward KCMG

Lady Brooke

Lynn Carter

Lucy Chandler OBE

Dame Judi Dench DBE

Lady Antonia Fraser DBE

Roger Graef OBE

Rosamund Horwood-Smart QC

Kurt and Caroline Jackson

Baroness Helena Kennedy QC

Bruce Kent

Neil Latchman

Caroline Moorehead OBE

Rabbi Julia Neuberger DBE

Sir Geoffrey Nice QC

The Hon Jonathon Porritt

Lord Puttnam CBE

Rev Dr Nicholas Sagovsky

Sir Tom Stoppard OM

Desmond Tutu Archbishop Emeritus

Zoë Wanamaker CBE



previous pa

Bursary recipient Manaf and Grants & Support

Manager Kirsty Bennett;

this page:

Patron Geoffrey Nice

and Vice Chair Victoria Brittain

Supporters

How you have helped

The last year has been incredibly challenging for all, but we've been humbled by the generosity and kindness of our supporters. We are extremely grateful for your continued commitment to defend human rights, enabling us to carry on our vital work providing life-saving support and transforming beneficiaries' lives.

Thank you.

How our supporters assist prisoners of conscience:

- Spreading the word about PoC and prisoners of conscience
- Volunteering
- Contributing to feedback surveys
- Joining our events
- Putting PoC in touch with organisations and people who would like to assist prisoners of conscience
- Helping to amplify the voices of prisoners of conscience
- · Donating and bequeathing legacies
- Fundraising

OUR HOME HEROES

Adapting to the challenges posed by the pandemic, PoC took part to the 2.6 Challenge, a digital campaign created by the charities and sports sectors to help raise funds to save UK's charities. We saw supporters, beneficiaries and staff members participating in all kinds of activities, from running 26km, to doing 26 push ups a day, and meditating for 26 days. All these creative ideas helped us raise £3,778 for prisoners of conscience around the world.

"I am extremely grateful to Prisoners of Conscience for helping me when I have lost my everything. Without the help of PoC, it simply would not have been possible to pick up my career where I had left off and pursue the ambition to be a qualified lawyer. PoC is changing lives and it is impossible to express how precious this idea of making positive changes to people's life. I am so thankful for the impact your assistance had on my life."



Aysegul Arkac, a former Judge in Turkey who was forced to flee with her children to the UK (leaving her husband who was also a Judge, sentenced to 8 years in jail), following the political coup in 2016 which saw more than 100,000 public officials sacked, suspended or arrested.

20

Accounts

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

Summary statement of financial activities

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Designated Funds	Total 2021	Total 2020
INCOME:	£	£	£	£	£
Donations and legacies	200,259	75,500	-	275,759	331,758
Income from investments	59	-	-	59	137
TOTAL INCOME	200,318	75,500	-	275,818	331,895
EXPENDITURE ON:					
Raising funds	31,616	25,135	-	56,751	60,918
Charitable activities	163,213	69,283	-	232,496	267,807
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	194,829	94,418	-	289,247	328,725
NET (EXPENDITURE)/ INCOME	5,489	(18,918)	-	(13,429)	3,170
Transfer between funds	114	(114)	-		
	5,603	(19,032)	-	(13,429)	3,170
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS Total funds brought forward	5,937	43,327	70,000	119,264	116,094
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	£11,540	£24,295	70,000	£105,835	£119,264

Balance Sheet at 31 March 2021

	2021	2020				
FIXED ASSETS	£	£				
Tangible assets	-	-				
CURRENT ASSETS						
Debtors	16,322	19,760				
Cash at bank and in hand	132,975	132,231				
	149,297	151,991				
CREDITORS: Amounts failing due within one year	(43,462)	(32,727)				
NET ASSETS	105,835	119,264				
FUNDS						
Restricted income funds	24,295	43,327				
Designated income funds	70,000	70,000				
Unrestricted income funds						
General reserve	11,540	5,937				
TOTAL CHARITY FUNDS	105,835	119,264				

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 23rd June 2021 and submitted to the Charity Commission. 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

David Lock QC CHAIR OF THE TRUSTEE BOARD

Alison Ward FCCA

contact us

PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE
PO BOX 61044
LONDON
SE1 1UP

- **** 020 7407 6644
- info@prisonersofconscience.org
- **y** @PoCHumanRights
- **f** @prisonersofconscience
- o @prisonersofconscienceappeal

www.prisonersofconscience.org

