



Prisoners of Conscience

Supporting people who defend human rights

Impact Report

2021/2022

Snapshot of our Support

Increased the number of people supported by 59%*

Assisted over
675
people

Made
275
grants to
267
prisoners
of conscience



Helped over
408
additional
family members

Increased grant
spending by
33%

Helped
13
refugees in exile to requalify
in the engineering, legal,
healthcare, biomedical
science, architecture,
statistics, construction,
business management
and human rights sectors.

Reunited
13
families
including
36
dependants

Supported prisoners
of conscience from
28
countries

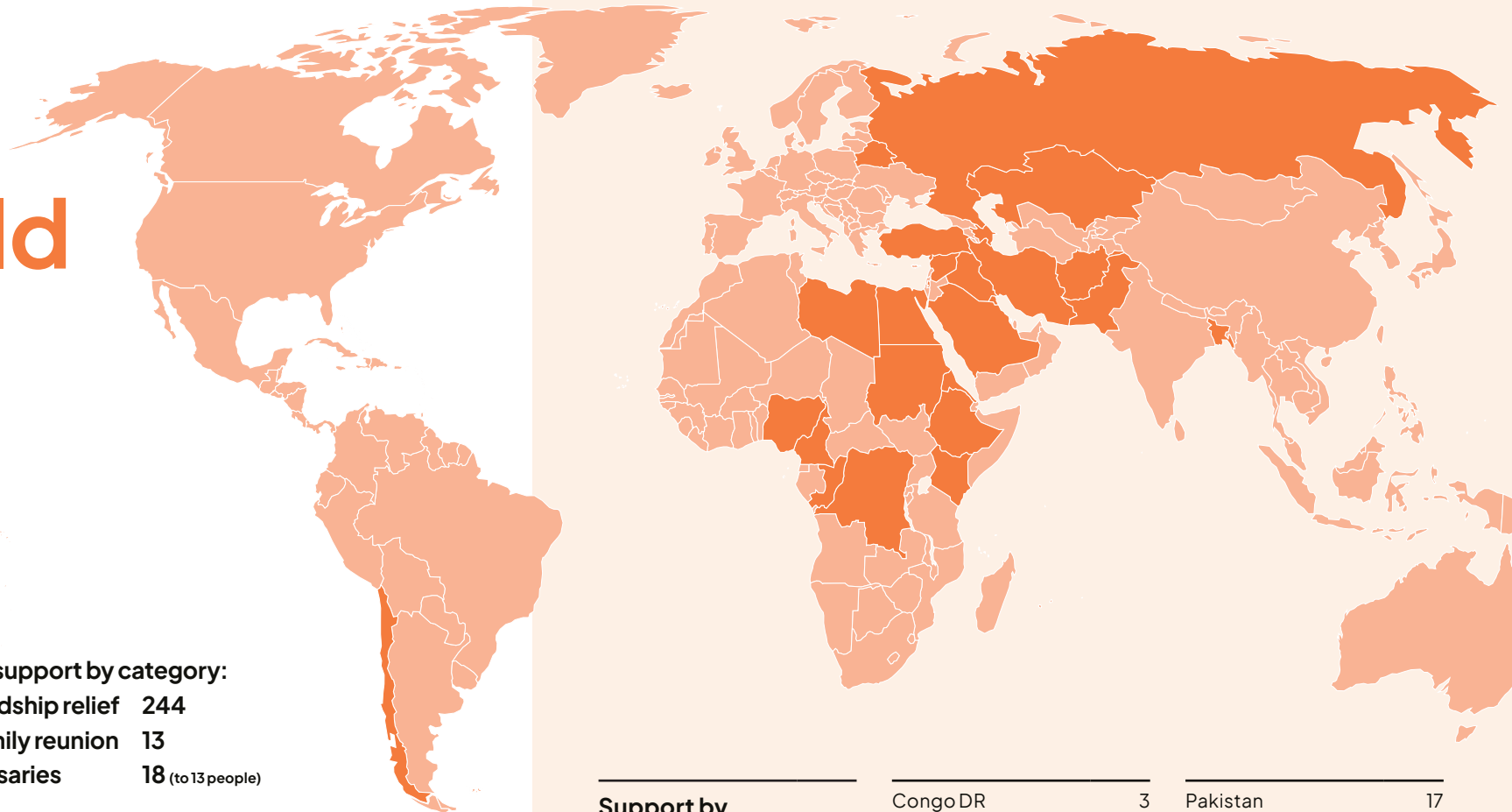
Collaborated with **26** referral agencies and other NGOs
to reach those whom we supported



“I have always believed that if you want something, you need to work for it as it won’t just be handed to you. I am very proud of what I have achieved so far and still will work very, and to be a judge in the future. I am totally sure that I have the dedication required to succeed and get back on my feet. That’s why I am extremely honoured to get the opportunity PoC has given me to study my course to be qualified as a lawyer.”

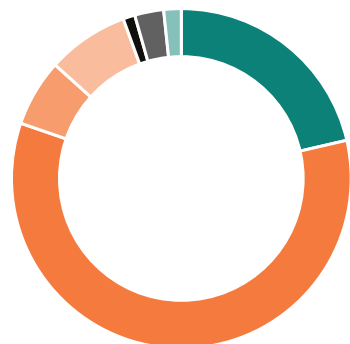
Aysegul
Judge from Turkey, giving a speech at our 2021 Requalification Bursary Awards Ceremony at Westminster Abbey

Impact Around The World



Grant support by category:

Hardship relief	244
Family reunion	13
Bursaries	18 (to 13 people)



Support by human right infringed:

Freedom of Expression	59
Freedom of Political Association	162
Freedom of Peaceful Assembly	18
Freedom of Religion	21
Resisting Pressure to Commit Violence	3
Right to Provide Humanitarian Assistance	8
Right to Express Sexual Identity	4

Support by country of origin

Afghanistan	19	Congo DR	3	Pakistan	17
Azerbaijan	2	Egypt	4	Palestine	2
Bangladesh	1	Eritrea	2	Romania	1
Belarus	7	Ethiopia	10	Russia	1
Burma	136	Iran	23	S. Arabia	1
Burundi	2	Iraq	1	Sudan	13
Cameroon	3	Kenya	2	Syria	4
Chile	1	Kazakhstan	1	Turkey	5
Congo Brazzaville	1	Kuwait	1	Turkmenistan	1
		Libya	1	Uganda	3
		Nigeria	2	Zimbabwe	5

Director's message

As democratic governments and global organisations charged with upholding human rights seem increasingly powerless to stop the tide of human rights abuses by authoritarian states, it is often the bravery of ordinary men and women that upholds the human rights of all of us. We pay tribute to the 267 prisoners of conscience and their families whom we supported in 2021/22 for their acts of courage and fortitude. With thanks to our donors and partner organisations, the lives of these 675 men, women and children across 28 countries are being transformed from persecution and hardship to safety and self-determination. Many of our donors have supported prisoners of conscience for over 3 decades, and the gratitude of those people whom we have supported in the last few years is evident in this report.

As part of our efforts to reach more prisoners of conscience, in 2021/22 we increased grant spending by 33%, reduced the costs of raising funds by 5% and eliminated office costs by moving to a remote working environment. We will continue to avoid any expenditure which does not directly benefit prisoners of conscience.

PoC marks its 60th anniversary on 11th October 2022 and we look forward to meeting as many of our supporters as possible at the events which we will run through 2022 and 2023. We will continue to focus on life-transforming grants for prisoners of conscience and, as we develop our package of support for additional practical assistance, we will help those whom we serve to achieve short and long term freedom, self-sufficiency and integration into their, often new, societies. It is indeed the sad yet unavoidable reality that prisoners of conscience and PoC may well need to exist for another 60 years or more.

We hope that you will find this report informative and agree that our new logo is a positive change from a submissive image to a more modern and dynamic logo and strapline. We would love to hear from our supporters with ideas on how we might yet better serve prisoners of conscience in the years ahead.



Gary Allison
DIRECTOR

Chair's message

The last twelve months have seen both advances and substantial setbacks for human rights across the world, and the role of those who take a stand for their and others' human rights has never been more important. As a Board, we are committed to PoC supporting hundreds of human rights heroes across the world. We use the money donated to us to make a difference to those who are persecuted for doing the right thing, for standing up for the rights of others and who work to make the voices of those whose rights are being violated heard. Our small but committed staff have performed wonders in the past year, overcoming another year when the pandemic has placed restrictions on how we can function and finding new ways to deliver the help that is so badly needed.

The online world is becoming central to the way human rights function. Technology can spread messages about the importance of diversity in society, exercising the human right to hold governments to account for abuses and to promote fundamental rights. But it can also be an instrument to abuse human rights, breaching free speech rights by closing down online discussions which criticise governments or, for example, religion or the military. We have seen an increase in those imprisoned for having the audacity to express contrary views, with social media and the internet becoming an instrument of oppression rather than a means of communicating ideas freely. PoC will continue to be there to support those who have the courage to express peaceful but dissenting views.

PoC is grateful to all our supporters who give us the means to make a difference. As our income increases, so we can help more human rights heroes. So can I offer a huge "thank you" to all the Trusts, individuals and organisations that have been so generous in the past year. I fear that many global trends are not going in the right direction and we will need your support even more in the coming year.



David Lock QC
CHAIR OF THE
TRUSTEE BOARD

Lives Transformed



Mohamad Alo
Bursary

Mohamad is a solicitor from Syria who had to pay a high price for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression. He was a member of a group of intellectuals who advocated for political change and the release of prisoners who had been arrested for speaking their mind and openly expressing their political views. Mohamad wanted the people of Syria to live in dignity and equality and for that he was detained and tortured.

Security forces interrogated him, beat him and threatened to hurt his wife and children. After a week of physical and psychological torture he was released. A year later he was arrested by the military police and exposed to ill treatment once again.

“They put you on a special chair for

torture where they tie you with metal chains, they put water on and beat me with electric wire.”

His family had to pay large sums of money to get him out, but this was only temporarily. When the police started arresting members of Mohamad’s group again, he knew he was next and so he decided to flee with his wife and 3 children.

“I dreamed of going back to legal practise, but was told by everyone – forget it, you have no chance”

When they arrived in the UK, Mohamad and his family had to rebuild their lives again. With the help of PoC, Mohamad was able to complete his legal conversion studies. But he barely spoke English and so he had to work twice as hard in order to succeed, while also adjusting to this new reality away from home.

“I could only understand about 20% of the lectures, and therefore prepared for the lecture topics for hours before each day’s lecture, and after the lecture thoroughly studied them again.”

Mohamad’s hard work and determination finally paid off. He successfully completed his studies and managed to secure a training contract to qualify as a solicitor – one of the few foreign qualified refugees to have achieved this in the UK, and a tribute to Mohamad’s dedication.

Eric
Overseas hardship relief

Many of us remember the story of Eric, who has been featured in previous PoC publications, and we are delighted to bring you the latest news on how Eric and his family have transformed their lives from extreme danger to safety and independence.

Eric was a journalist, human rights defender, and a father of four from Rwanda. He was routinely harassed by state agents for critically reporting on the government’s socio-economic policies and fighting for justice, press freedom and democracy in Rwanda. When Eric was warned that his life was in danger for expressing his views, he decided to flee to neighbouring Uganda with his family.

But threats and intimidation followed them there. With no source of income, Eric was struggling to provide food, water, clothing, and medicine for his family. PoC awarded several grants to help cover their basic living expenses while they remained in hiding and at risk from Rwandan militia, who were searching for him, and deal with the practical and psychological consequences of a life in limbo.

“For 4 years and 2 months in refugee camp in Uganda, both financial and advocacy support from PoC was very significant, until we got safely relocated to Australia. After getting to Australia, the task was to build our life independently. Education came to mind. I presented my bachelor’s degree of management to the department of education but was rejected stating that my country-of-origin Rwanda is not listed to



the countries from where degrees are acknowledged by Australia. I decided to start studies again from zero. It was a very hard task to combine family responsibilities with studying in the new country with the new / different culture.”

While it was a huge adjustment for them all, they are embracing their new life with optimism and determination. The children are at school and Eric was recently awarded his Diploma of Nursing, after completing his studies and a clinical placement. His next steps are to further his career prospects by obtaining a bachelor’s degree in Nursing and become a registered nurse.

“Thank you! I am and I’ll be always very grateful about everything you have done on my behalf.”

“However, even if I was saved, prisoners of conscience are still pending in Africa and in other countries where democracy and freedom of speech are not yet implemented. I encourage all partners of PoC to raise more funds and to keep advocating on behalf of people who have been victims for their thought and their ideas.”



Lina Ahmadi
Overseas hardship relief

Lina, a defence lawyer and women's rights activist from Afghanistan, has been involved in activist causes since her teens. When the Taliban took over Afghanistan, she continued her human rights work despite the huge risk involved. She organised events and protests mobilising women to peacefully protest against the Taliban.

"Before the Taliban I was a defence lawyer and had worked in different parts of the justice system of

Afghanistan for five years. I had good experience and I was very happy to be self-sufficient. But with the arrival of the Taliban, everything fell out of place and I became unemployed. Life is far more difficult for everyone under the rule of such a group that is prohibiting our daughters from going to school in the 21st century and is massacring our people."

Lina was attending a protest to raise awareness of the Taliban's denial of women's rights, when the Taliban began to violently crack down on protestors and dissenters. She and other women sought refuge at what

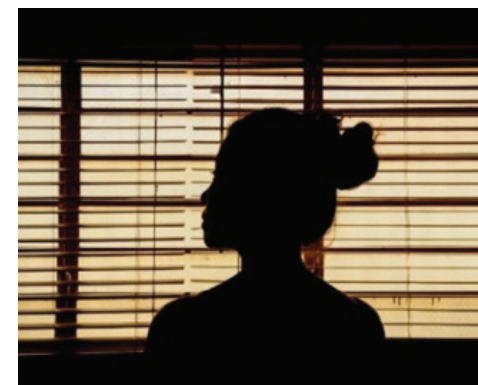
they thought was a safe house. Two days later the Taliban ambushed the house and detained all the women who were living there. They were only released after making forced confessions and made to sign statements under coercion.

"From the shock of the days in prison, we have not yet come out, and it is very difficult for me to remember those days. It was a difficult dark day to be held captive in the ward of the group for whom you are the biggest criminal in his sight."

Lina is now in hiding but she has continued to engage and advocate for these same women's rights issues, even though she must now do so online. Her imprisonment has not stopped her activism and her passion for these causes.

"We will continue to fight for our basic human rights from those who are totally alien to these words, they know nothing but suicide and corruption. We do not back down from our demands, our struggle continues, and we have become stronger than before. As long as we are alive, we will continue. The Taliban may have gotten our geography into suicide and explosion, but people's hearts are not getting suicide and corruption. Maybe the Taliban have forgotten that these women are not women from 20 years ago, they are not silent in the face of injustice."

PoC has awarded a grant to Lina towards her living expenses and medical bills while in hiding as well as visas and passports for her and her family to reach safety.



Mamie
Family reunion

Mamie was an assistant nurse and receptionist at a small private hospital in DRC. She was asked to poison a member of the opposition by a colleague, for which she would be paid well. She refused and was then abducted, beaten and raped over a period of 3 days.

In fear of her life, Mamie decided to flee to the UK and leave everything behind. She has been trying to bring her children to the UK, but the process has been slow and tedious. She has one biological daughter and four adopted children – her sister's children whom she adopted when her sister died.

PoC helped Mamie to cover the costs of her family reunion application. Since then, nearly two years have passed and only her biological child has been given an entry visa. The process for the adopted children has been slower but they were recently granted visas on appeal and are about to join the family. PoC awarded an additional grant to Mamie to help with the costs associated with their arrival.



Francis

Family reunion and hardship relief

Francis was a senior political activist in the main opposition party in Congo-Brazzaville. At the age of 17, as a low-ranking member of the party, he was detained for two months because of his participation in protests. He was eventually released due to NGO intervention pressurising for the release of young detainees.

In detention he was treated very badly and questioned. Francis continued his activism and following his involvement in protests against a change in the constitution, he was detained again for four months. He was again beaten and questioned. When he was released from detention the second time, he was warned by the authorities to leave the country, or he would be detained again. His

family's home was burned down by the authorities, and they were forced to go into hiding.

When Francis left for the UK, his wife was repeatedly visited by the authorities who wanted to know his whereabouts, so she was forced to move. The family have suffered a lengthy reunion process that has caused significant financial hardship. When they arrived in the UK they were faced with ongoing costs. PoC provided Francis with a laptop and contributed towards living expenses and clothing to help him and his family adjust to life in the UK.

"With my family in the United Kingdom, I thank Prisoners of Conscience for the amazing grant I received which helped me buy emergency items for my family."



Sahar Ajdamsani

Overseas hardship relief

Sahar Ajdamsani is an Iranian singer, music producer, writer, and activist. She focuses on themes of peace, human rights and women's rights. In 2019, she became the first Iranian to win the international WILD sound Poetry Festival with her poem "Censorship," which focuses on women's rights.

Due to her work and activism, Sahar began receiving calls from a private number, which she believed to be from the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence. Her bank account was blocked at the same time with no warning.

In September '21 intelligence services called her family and asked Sahar to appear for a summons on the morning of September 10th. Her family's bank accounts were then

blocked. Sahar went into hiding and moved between safe houses for two months, seeking avenues to leave the country.

In October, fearing for her safety if she stayed in Iran, Sahar crossed the border to Iraq and began living in Erbil on a temporary visa. She was living in a hotel but had no money since her bank accounts had been blocked.

Thanks to our supporter's generosity, we have been able to help Sahar with a hardship grant.

"I would like to thank Prisoners of Conscience from the bottom of my heart to supporting me & also turned the light of hope for me. Your kind consideration is highly appreciated."

Package of Support

In the past year, we've evolved from being solely a grant-making organisation, to develop a framework offering tailored, holistic and practical support to prisoners of conscience, specific to each person's needs. While our central aim and use of funds remains grant-making, a Package of Support is offered to facilitate integration and help achieve economic independence. We appreciate that the needs and aspirations of each prisoner of conscience will be different, depending on their own personal circumstances. We are therefore working closely with each prisoner of conscience to better understand their current position, explore which aspects of our Package of Support may be helpful to them, and try and support them in a way that is meaningful and sustainable.

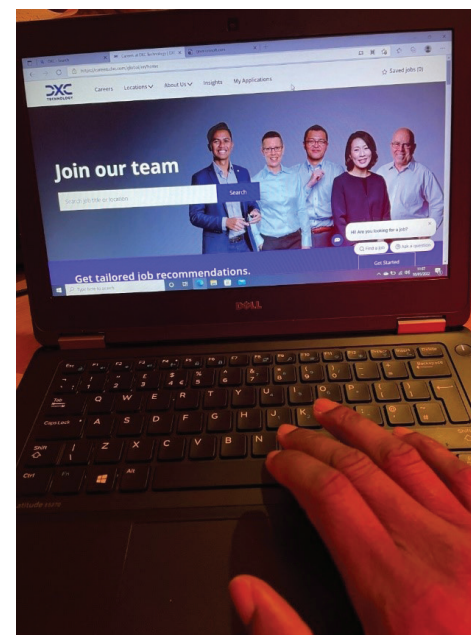
In addition to one-to-one conversations, this past year we hosted two interactive webinars to discuss the Package of Support in more detail, get feedback from the people we help, and explore other potential areas of need and improvement.

A total of 36 people from around the world signed up to our webinars, making the input into both sessions diverse, constructive, and informative.

One of our main goals continues to be to expand across, and outside of, the UK to help transform the lives of even more prisoners of conscience in need. We are always trying to strengthen our ties with our existing networks and reach out to new organisations that might be able to assist. In the last year, we've

introduced three new elements to our Package of Support - signposting to legal and advisory services, facilitating access to mental health therapy and providing technology support. So far, with the help of our new partner organisations, we have provided laptops to 9 prisoners of conscience to help them integrate, advance their studies or improve their employment prospects. While we are still trying to make this practical framework more robust and optimise its implementation, we have seen

demand for elements of our Package of Support increase. In the past year, 15 people accessed our Employability Panel, while 11 joined our PoC alumni forum. In addition, many prisoners of conscience have expressed their interest in volunteering with us, by writing blogs for our website, sharing their story or speaking at our events. Spreading the word and getting more prisoners of conscience involved remains a priority for the next years.



“Through the PoC Employability Panel, I enrolled and completed an IT training course with the Refugee Council, who continue to help me to secure employment. So far, I have had several interviews and hopefully will succeed soon. PoC also provided me with a laptop, which is helping me with the job application process. I am truly grateful and can’t thank you enough for your continuous assistance.”

Utondu
Prisoner of conscience
from Nigeria

“Computer Aid has been collaborating with Prisoners of conscience in the past 6 months and we have provided laptops to their volunteers and clients. We are proud to facilitate the work of Prisoners of Conscience in their admirable mission.”





Prisoners of Conscience Holiday Fund Jersey



We have been fortunate to work with a wonderful charity, POCHFJ, for over 3 decades to provide respite holidays for prisoners of conscience in Jersey. From the Murtic* family from Bosnia in 1994 to a recent family from Burundi**, prisoners of conscience are able to enjoy what is often their first holiday in many years, following their brave acts of conscience and subsequent persecution.

We thank POCHFJ, and particularly Collette Crill, Chairwoman, Bob Le Sueur MBE, co-founder and continuing support at the age of nearly 102, and many kind donors from Jersey for making these life-transforming holidays possible for prisoners of conscience.

“POCHFJ has been delighted to work with the admirable team at POCUK for many years, whose efficiency and good humour – while referring dozens of deserving beneficiaries to us for our special Jersey holidays – have made our partnership a thoroughly enjoyable one. Long may it continue!”

Collette Crill
Jurat C A Crill
Lieutenant Bailiff of Jersey
Chairwoman, POCHFJ

Referral agencies in 2021/2022

Amnesty International	European Belarus Foundation	PAFRAS
Article 19 – East Africa	Freedom from Torture – London and Manchester	PEN : English, USA and Canada
Article 26	Helen Bamber Foundation	RefuAid
Ashiana	Human Rights Focus Pakistan	Rory Peck Trust
Assistance Association for Political Prisoners – Burma	Human Rights Watch	Scottish Refugee Council
Azadi Charity	Islington Law Centre	Together Now
Birmingham Settlement	Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine	Waverley Care
Breaking Barriers	NIACRO	Welcoming Association
British Red Cross – London and Liverpool		Zimbabwe Peace Project
Daphne Galizia Foundation		

“Azadi are extremely appreciative of the relationship with PoC. Throughout the initial process of approaching PoC to discuss our work, registering with PoC as a referral agency, submitting ongoing applications for consideration, and continuing wider conversations of potential areas for development, PoC have been informative, approachable, available and supportive. PoC clearly aim to use their resources to provide the most targeted meaningful support they can to the recipients of their grants. They have been as helpful to Azadi as possible to keep us aware of potential opportunities that may be

appropriate for Azadi beneficiaries. PoC have always taken the time to discuss and find suitable ways to address a varied range of Azadi’s queries and suggestions. PoC grants make a hugely important impact on recipients who are in the most dire situations. The financial support POC provides Azadi’s beneficiaries gives them essential resources needed to survive. We are so pleased to have had the opportunity to become a referral agency with PoC and look forward to continuing our ongoing relationship into the future.”

Azadi Charity
Assisting at-risk, targeted Afghans to evacuate and resettle.

Our Funders

Everything we have achieved in the past year has only been made possible thanks to the ongoing support and generosity of our funders and donors. We offer our sincere thanks to each and every one of you for your continued support during these uncertain times.

In addition to the generosity of many private individual donors, we benefitted from the support of the following charitable trusts and foundations:

Allen Charitable Trust	Law Society Charity
Austin and Hope Pilkington Trust	Libra Group Social Responsibility
Berni Charitable Trust	Lindsay Foundation
DG Charitable Settlement	Pat Newman Memorial Trust
Eleanor Rathbone Charitable Trust	Silicon Valley Community Fund
Eric and Leila DaCosta Fund	Souter Charitable Trust
Gordon Fraser Charitable Trust	Sue Rouse Trust
Graham Child Trust	Thornton Foundation
Joffe Charitable Trust	Topinambour Charitable Trust
Jomati Foundation	WGFJM Charitable Trust

With special thanks to The Joffe Charitable Trust for the last 3 years' of support to help strengthen our fundraising ability.

“Prisoners of Conscience offers a lifeline to those who have paid a devastating price for standing up for what is right. It’s been a privilege to partner with their small, committed team by funding their income generation work. Investing in these core costs is essential to strengthen the organisation for the long term, so that the charity can continue to support human rights defenders and their families around the world. This work only becomes more important in the current economic crisis.”

Alex Jacobs
Director of The Joffe Charitable Trust

Our people



We are a small team of one full-time and 3 part-time 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
Kevin Taylor-McKnight, Philanthropy Manager
Klajdi Selimi, Administration & Fundraising Assistant (part of 2021)
Kathy Moss, External Accountant

Volunteers

Sophie Baker
Daniele Chiarantini
Shivani Kumar
Jesse Laurie
Timea Olah
Rowan O'Neill
Leonie Williams

Trustees and Patrons

We are fortunate to be supported by skilled and committed directors of the corporate trustee:

David Lock QC (Chair)

Diba Alikhani

Victoria Brittain (Vice Chair) – retired in 2021

Dr Dorothy Connell

Keith Davis – appointed in 2021

Justin Glenister – retired in 2021

Stefanie Grant – retired in 2021

Dr Roger Harrison

Mandira Sharma – appointed in 2021

Jonathan Taylor – appointed in 2021

As part of our governance rules, the directors of the corporate trustee are obliged to resign after 9 years of service. We would like to thank all the directors for their dedication and support for prisoners of conscience.

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

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 (passed away in June 2022)

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
(passed away in December 2021)

Zoë Wanamaker CBE

How you have helped

We continue to live through very uncertain economic times, and nobody feels this more than prisoners of conscience, many of whom live on the very margins of society.

The outstanding generosity of our supporters over the past year is very humbling. We want to take this opportunity to say a heartfelt thank you, on behalf of all of the people we work with.

We are extremely grateful for your continued commitment to defend prisoners of conscience and their human rights. Only thanks to your support can we carry on our work delivering immediate support in times of crisis and transforming the lives of the people that we work with.

Thank you!

How you can help

Please consider how you can make a difference to the lives of prisoners of conscience by supporting in one or more of the following ways:

- Donating to our campaigns or giving monthly
- Spreading the word about PoC fundraising campaigns (including our Spring Appeal, Summer Big Give and Christmas Big Give)
- Attending and spreading word about our events
- Making introductions to others (people and organisations) who might be interested in supporting our work assisting prisoners of conscience
- Remembering Prisoners of Conscience in your Will
- Fundraising in aid of Prisoners of Conscience
- Helping to amplify the voices and stories of prisoners of conscience through social media
- Volunteering your time
- Contributing to feedback surveys

Please contact us if you would like to discuss your support in more detail or for further information about any of these activities. You can find our contact details on the back page.

Consolidated accounts

Statement of Financial Activities for the period ended 31 March 2022

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Designated Funds	Total 2022	Total 2021
INCOME:	£	£	£	£	£
Donations and legacies	248,876	91,668	-	340,544	275,759
Income from investments	11	-	-	11	59
TOTAL INCOME	248,887	91,668	-	340,555	275,818
EXPENDITURE ON:	£	£	£	£	£
Raising funds	30,304	22,483	-	52,787	56,751
Charitable activities	216,421	48,218	-	264,639	232,496
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	246,725	70,701	-	317,426	289,247
NET INCOME/ (EXPENDITURE)	2,162	20,967	-	23,129	(13,429)
Transfer between funds	10,000	-	(10,000)	-	-
Net movement in funds	12,162	20,967	(10,000)	23,129	(13,429)
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS					
Total funds brought forward	11,540	24,295	70,000	105,835	119,264
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	£23,702	£45,262	£60,000	£128,964	£105,835

Balance Sheet at 31 March 2022

	2022	2021
FIXED ASSETS	£	£
Tangible assets	-	-
CURRENT ASSETS		
Debtors	47,620	16,322
Cash at bank and in hand	128,572	132,975
	176,192	149,297
CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within one year	-47,228	-43,462
NET ASSETS	128,964	105,835
FUNDS		
Restricted income funds	45,262	24,295
Designated income funds	60,000	70,000
Unrestricted income funds	23,702	11,540
General reserve		
TOTAL CHARITY FUNDS	128,964	105,835

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 15TH June 2022 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 SE11UP



David Lock QC
CHAIR OF THE TRUSTEE BOARD



Alison Ward FCCA
INDEPENDENT EXAMINER



Prisoners of Conscience

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www.prisonersofconscience.org

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