

Our objects clause and theory of change

Preamble

Our charity continues to evolve with an expanded objects clause complementing financial grants with practical support and the promotion of the human rights of prisoners of conscience. This document sets out our new objects clause and our consequent theory of change.

Objects clause

2. The objects of the Fund are to:

2.1 Prevent and relieve the poverty of any person throughout the world (and any spouse, child or dependant of any such persons) who has performed an act of conscience to uphold human rights (as contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations conventions and declarations and related regional instruments) for which they have been, or are likely to be imprisoned, persecuted or subjected to suffering, or have fled from their country to avoid such imprisonment, persecution or suffering, provided they have not used or advocated violence (a “prisoner of conscience”).

2.2 Promote the human rights of prisoners of conscience through the following means –

2.2.1 Relieve the needs of and eliminate infringements of human rights of prisoners of conscience by providing grants or other assistance.

2.2.2 Engage with the public, government and law makers to support prisoners of conscience and their ability to continue to raise human rights issues; provide technical advice on human rights matters; and contribute to the sound administration of human rights law by providing practical support to meet the safety, security, migration, integration, employment and mental health of prisoners of conscience.

Theory of Change

Diagram

VISION

Prisoners of conscience and human rights defenders are able to:

- live in safety, with self-determination and financial independence
- continue to uphold and advance human rights

OUTCOMES and IMPACT

FINANCIAL GRANTS

Financial grants for hardship, safety, family reunion and requalification needs

PRACTICAL ASSISTANCE

Practical support and signposting for employability, advisory, migration, integration, safety, IT and mental health needs

PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Promotion of the rights of prisoners of conscience and human rights defenders to amplify their voices and enable them to continue to raise human rights issues

MISSION

Providing support to keep prisoners of conscience and human rights defenders and their voices alive

Narrative

A. Prisoners of conscience and human rights defenders

For purposes of our theory of change and following the definitions in our objects clause and in the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, the terms prisoners of conscience and human rights defenders are used interchangeably.

B. Situation of prisoners of conscience and why our work is critical

Following their courageous acts of conscience to uphold and advance human rights, prisoners of conscience face persecution, threats to their lives and are often forced to flee their countries. As we face increased challenges through the rise of authoritarianism, it often falls to ordinary people to uphold human rights for all of us.

According to OHCHR and other NGOs, hundreds of human rights defenders are killed each year. Given our broader definition of prisoners of conscience, it is certain that many thousands of prisoners of conscience annually need the support which we provide.

C. Our vision and mission

Our vision is a world in which prisoners of conscience and human rights defenders are able to live in safety, with self-determination and financial independence and to continue to uphold and advance human rights. This is only achievable through strong collaboration and focus across civil society and human rights NGOs. Within this context, our mission and activities are focused on providing support to keep prisoners of conscience and their voices alive. While other NGOs advocate and campaign for human rights, we focus on meeting the immediate hardship needs of prisoners of conscience and human rights defenders. We believe that it is important to hear their voices directly and that this is only possible if they have the financial security and safe space for self-determination in their work.

D. Our work

We support prisoners of conscience through three overarching strategies – financial grants, practical support and promoting the human rights of prisoners of conscience.

Financial grants are the mainstay of our work – without our hardship, family reunion and requalification grants, prisoners of conscience may be faced with no sources of financial assistance for their safety, migration, travel, food, accommodation, mental health and reintegration

needs. We support, on average, over 200 prisoners of conscience and a further 450 family members/dependants each year. **Our goal, given a sufficient increase in income, is to triple this support within two years.**

Practical support for prisoners of conscience is delivered through a toolkit for those who remain in their countries of origin or in interim countries and a package of support for those who have reached the United Kingdom. Each year about 80% of the people to whom we make financial grants continue to live in their countries of origin or in an interim country, with severe hardship and security needs and striving to reach countries of safety. We have produced a toolkit for these prisoners of conscience which signposts to and collaborates with over thirty NGOs and to UN bodies who could meet their acute needs and assist them with advocacy and campaigning. For prisoners of conscience who have had to flee to the United Kingdom, our package of support provides signposting assistance for employability, advisory, mental health, IT and reintegration needs, through collaboration with numerous NGOs. We aim to provide them the space and time to recover from the persecution they have faced in their home countries, while allowing and equipping them with the tools to continue their important work.

Promoting the human rights of prisoners of conscience is key to enable them to continue their human rights work. This includes publishing case studies and global human rights impact reports, work with the APPG for Human Rights, members of Parliament and the House of Lords in the United Kingdom and collaboration with other NGOs on country-specific and particular human rights issues. It further includes assistance with reaching countries of safety, UK immigration and human rights policy and the use of social media and events to draw attention to the issues faced by the individuals and communities with whom we work. We believe that creating a more robust system for the protection of human rights defenders will allow them to more freely engage in their work and advocacy to get as many states as possible to uphold the principles set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and ultimately contributing to a world order driven by justice and accountability.

E. Why Human Rights Protection Fund is well placed to make a difference

Distinctiveness and Collaboration

Since 1962, we have supported tens of thousands of prisoners of conscience and their family members, awarding grants to them across over 70 countries, utilising our network of and collaborating with over 60 NGOs and referral agencies. Our research suggests that we are the only UK-based charity which focuses on meeting the hardship needs of prisoners of conscience and human rights defenders.

In the words of Mary Lawlor, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders:

“By providing small grants and support to human rights defenders and others, Prisoners of Conscience [Human Rights Protection Fund] enables tangible changes in the lives of individuals, supporting them in times of adversity and helping them start their lives over when they are released or when they reach safety.”

With an established network of referral agencies, a small staff team working remotely so as to save on office and overhead expenses and many more volunteers, automated processes and paperless working and a fully involved trustee board which scrutinises all grant applications, we are well placed to substantially increase the number of prisoners of conscience supported annually without any commensurate increase in overheads.