

# At the heart of the global humanist movement

Annual Report 2021



**Humanists**  
INTERNATIONAL

# Foreword by Andrew



**2021 was a very successful year for Humanists International. Despite the ongoing and lingering impact of the COVID-19 pandemic we continue to see strong growth in membership, and the expansion of our various programmes of activity and work.**

Sadly, in early 2021 we took the decision – in partnership with our member SOCH Nepal – to cancel the upcoming General Assembly there. We would like to pay particular tribute to that organization for the significant amount of work they did with the World Health Organization (WHO) to mitigate the impact of the pandemic, which was particularly severe in that global region. We remain committed to returning to Asia for a General Assembly in the coming years.

Thanks to the hard work of our staff, in conjunction with Members and Associates across Asia, we were able to organize an online conference which had over 100 participants to discuss issues of importance to humanists in Asia. Following this we had another successful online General Assembly which you can read more about in the report below. The Board of Humanists International is very much looking forward to returning to the program of in-person General Assemblies next year.

Significant progress was made in two key areas of new work: Firstly we continued our negotiations and discussions with the European Humanist Federation, and our own Members and Associates in Europe, to develop a program of work which will help bolster existing activities in the region and empower our members to focus on areas of service development and advocacy at the EU institutions. Secondly we were also successful in securing a major package of funding from a U.S. donor to support a programme of activities to increase the capacity and security of our Members in the south Asian region, focusing particularly on Nepal and Sri Lanka. This will be a key piece of work for us and will help to push forward our aims to have a more strategic approach to safety and security especially in that global region. The program will be delivered working in close collaboration with the Member organizations in the region, and we hope this will lead to an ongoing relationship with new donors and partners.

As you will know, our friend and colleague Mubarak Bala continues to be detained wrongfully at the hands of the Nigerian authorities. We have been working tirelessly to co-ordinate the legal, diplomatic and campaigning efforts on his behalf, and we are working closely with several key allies and stakeholders to do this. By the end of the year we had raised almost £30,000 and worked with key figures from at least 30 different state governments. The ultimate aim of this is to ensure Mubarak's safe and unconditional release and reunion in a safe area with his family. The board of Humanists International is confident that we have the resources and expertise to work for as long as it takes to support this. Mubarak Bala is an international humanist leader who is being persecuted for the expression of his deeply held beliefs in line with a humanist worldview and the ongoing attempt to silence, intimidate and persecute him will not be tolerated.

As we prepare for the 2022 General Assembly in Glasgow, I would also like to take an opportunity to express my deep gratitude to all of our Members and Associates and supporters around the world for your ongoing support for me in the role of President. I will be seeking one more mandate at the upcoming General Assembly during which time I intend to work closely with the Board on a transition plan which will move us forward with a new President, elected in due course. I will also continue to work with the Board on plans for the 2023 World Humanist Congress, which I'm confident will be executed to the highest standards, and will be the first Congress we have hosted in almost a decade.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Copson".

**Andrew Copson**  
President



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# Introduction

**In 2021, like most international NGOs and indeed society as a whole, Humanists International continued to face challenges as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Despite this, the team has worked hard to adapt and find new ways of working to support the humanist community and achieve our strategic objectives.**

It is fair to say that the injustice surrounding our friend and colleague, Mubarak Bala, cast a shadow over 2021 and has been a key area of focus for the organization. This will remain a priority until the day we secure his safe release and we are continuing to do everything we can to support him.

The fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban also loomed heavily, worsening the situation for humanists and atheists there. More than 30% of requests for help from humanists at risk came from Afghanistan in 2021. At the United Nations, Humanists International urged the international community to establish a fact-finding mission to investigate and report on abuses and violations of human rights.

However, despite the challenges, there were also successes, achievements and progress made in many other key areas.

At the 2021 General Assembly, humanists from around the world unanimously voted to approve a new policy resolution on the worldwide abolition of laws against blasphemy. The resolution reaffirms the humanist commitment to freedom of thought, conscience, expression and belief for all, and the conviction that societies prosper best in conditions where free and rational debate, critical thinking, artistic creativity, and scientific freedom are allowed to flourish.

We launched the 10th edition of our Freedom of Thought report, to coincide with the 40-year anniversary of the UN General Assembly Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. We also welcomed a report by the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief – written following a number of consultations with Humanist International members and associates – which highlights the importance of the human right to freedom of thought.

The work that Humanists International undertakes is only possible thanks to our members, associates and supporters. We were delighted to welcome several new members and associates to the organization in 2021, helping to further strengthen our global community and our impact as an organization.

We have also been truly grateful for the generosity of our individual supporters. My most sincere thanks goes out to everyone who has been able to support us this year, despite the uncertain economic climate. A very special thank you goes out to a select number of individuals who became Life Supporters this year, as well as those who have pledged to leave a gift in their Will to Humanists International. This heartfelt and long-term commitment to supporting the humanist movement is truly humbling and will make an enormous difference in the weeks, months and years ahead.

Thank you,



**Gary McLelland**  
Chief Executive





# The Objectives of Humanists International



Since 1952, Humanists International has been the global representative body of the humanist movement, uniting a diversity of non-religious organizations and individuals.

We want everyone to live a life of dignity in a world where universal human rights are respected and protected, and where states uphold secularism.

We work to build, support and represent the global humanist movement, defending human rights, particularly those of non-religious people, and promoting humanist values worldwide.

# Our people

## Our board



**President:**  
Andrew Copson  
United Kingdom



**Vice-president:**  
Anne-France Ketelaer  
Belgium



**Treasurer:**  
Boris Van Der Ham  
Netherlands



**Board Member:**  
Anya Overman  
United States of  
America



**Board Member:**  
David Pineda  
Guatemala



**Board Member:**  
Debbie Goddard  
United States of  
America



**Board Member:**  
Leo Igwe  
Nigeria



**Board Member:**  
Uttam Niraula  
Nepal



**Board Member:**  
Roslyn Mould  
Ghana



**Board Member:**  
Kristin Mile  
Norway

## Our personnel



**Chief Executive:**  
Gary McLelland



**Assistant to the  
Chief Executive:**  
Andres Martinez Torres



**Director of Advocacy:**  
Elizabeth O'Casey



**Casework and  
Campaigns Manager:**  
Emma Wadsworth-Jones



**Membership  
Engagement Manager:**  
Giovanni Gaetani



**Monitoring and  
Evaluation Consultant:**  
Holly Strauss



**Social Media & Young  
Humanists Consultant:**  
Javan Lev Poblador



**Finance and  
Operations Manager:**  
Jean Zong



**Freedom of Thought  
Report Consultant:**  
Jessica McDonald



**MENA Advocacy &  
Casework Consultant:**  
Kacem El Ghazzali



**Advocacy Officer:**  
Lillie Ashworth



**Casework and  
Campaigns Intern:**  
Seif Zakaria





## Update on Mubarak Bala

**2021 marked a year of ongoing violations of the rights of our colleague Mubarak Bala – the President of the Humanist Association of Nigeria. Arrested in April 2020, Bala remained in detention without charge for much of 2021, despite a December 2020 Federal High Court ruling ordering his release on bail.**

In August 2021, formal charges were brought against Bala before the Kano State High Court. Bala, who was not present in court, was formally charged with ‘causing a public disturbance’ under Sections 210 and 114 of the Penal Code of Kano State in connection with five Facebook posts Bala is alleged to have made in April 2020.

Humanists International continues to finance Bala’s legal defense, working in close coordination to ensure that campaigning activities complement legal strategy. Throughout the year, Humanists International and its Members and Associates continued to coordinate a campaign to ensure his safety and release. #FreeMubarakBala campaigning activities included organizing online and in-person protests, liaising with government officials and diplomats, and highlighting his case in the international media and with international bodies.

To mark the one-year anniversary of his arrest, Humanists International coordinated a coalition of 87 organizations and concerned

individuals across the globe in the production of an open letter directed at the Governor of Kano State, Abdullahi Umar Ganduje, seeking Bala’s immediate and unconditional release. Adding their voice to the chorus of 48 humanist organizations from across the globe – alongside notable humanist individuals based in the UK and the Netherlands – were bastions of freedom of expression such as Index on Censorship, the Electronic Frontiers Foundation, PEN International, PEN Nigeria and the African Freedom of Expression Exchange.

In recognition of his efforts and contributions to promote humanist values in Nigeria, the General Assembly of Humanists International awarded Mubarak Bala with the 2021 Freedom of Thought Award.

Humanists International believes that Mubarak Bala is being targeted for his peaceful exercise of his rights to freedom of religion or belief and expression. The organization will continue to support Bala’s case until such time as he is released and safe.

# Report on the General Assembly

After a successful conference on Saturday 14 August, the global humanist community gathered virtually once again on Sunday 15 August for the 2021 Online General Assembly of Humanists International, held online for the second year in a row.

Over 80 delegates from across the world attended the event. Among them, many representatives of member organizations, staff and Board members, and Individual Supporters of Humanists International.

**During his opening remarks, President of Humanists International and chair of the event, Andrew Copson, said:**

*"We should have been holding our General Assembly in Nepal this year, hosted by our friends at the Society for Humanism in Nepal. We took the difficult decision to cancel the General Assembly in Nepal in conjunction with our Member there. SOCH Nepal played a significant role in the vaccine rollout, in partnership with the World Health Organization, and other public health organizations. Like in so many places around the world, it's humanists we see at the forefront of social welfare and community support programmes.*

*"We must also take a moment to pause and reflect on the continued illegal detention of our dear friend and colleague Mubarak Bala. Mubarak has been detained arbitrarily and illegally for 474 days. 474 days. Two birthdays. 474 days not spent with his wife and family. Mubarak is the President of the Humanist Association of Nigeria and his continued illegal detention by Nigerian authorities is a stain on the reputation of that country."*





## Resolutions and Awards

The General Assembly also unanimously voted to approve two new resolutions:

- **A Resolution on the Worldwide Abolition of Laws Against Blasphemy;**
- **A Resolution on the Global Access to Vaccines in Response to the COVID-19 pandemic.**

The following three people were awarded the 2021 Distinguished Service to Humanism Award.

**Steven Pinker who commented upon receiving his award:**

*"What an honour! Humanism has never been more important. People are hungering for a coherent source of purpose to help them deal with the challenges of the present and the permanent dilemmas of the human condition. The old supernatural myths cannot satisfy that longing, nor can divisive political sectarianism. Our hope lies in the human capacity for sympathy and reason, and in the institutions that amplify them. I thank Humanists International for this recognition, and extend my appreciation to humanists the world over for the vital work you do."*

**Bonya Rafida Ahmed, who commented:**

*"Thank you so much! This is a great honor. If there's something COVID-19 has shown the world, it's that we need humanism – reason, understanding and compassion – more than ever. If we think this ruthless pandemic is bad, we should remember that much worse is ahead in the near future; we cannot solve a massive existential crisis like climate change without reason, scientific understanding and unity among our species. Big thanks to Humanists International for this award, and for standing for the values that can save on this planet."*

**Shanti Gurung said:**

*"I would like to thank Humanists International for awarding me with Distinguished Service to Humanism Award 2021. I believe there are thousands of our friends worldwide who equally deserve this award. I want to dedicated this award to those who have lost their lives and those who are forced to leave their home, and those who are behind the bar just because of different thoughts."*

*"I would also like to thank SOCH Nepal and Mr. Uttam Niraula for providing a platform to serve and to be recognized as a humanist."*

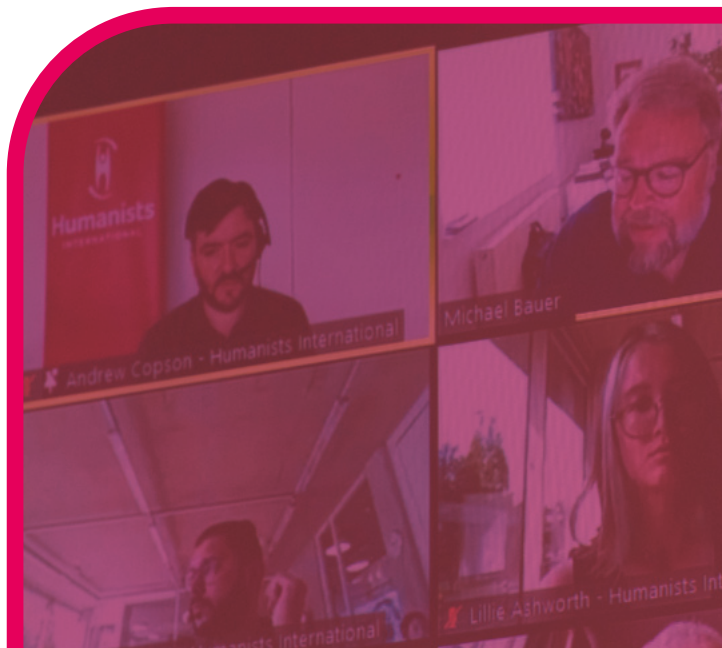




The Board of Humanists International also decided to award Mubarak Bala with the 2021 Freedom of Thought Award.

**Amina Ahmed received the award on behalf of her husband Mubarak, commenting the award with these words:**

*"On behalf of my husband Mubarak Bala, I really want to thank humanists all over the world for this wonderful honor. This award has really shown that the world still cares for Mubarak, and that Mubarak has not been forgotten. This is to show that humanity is above all regardless of religion and belief. I thank Humanists International for your utmost support and care for Mubarak's family. We don't know how to thank you enough, all I can say is thanks a zillion! And I know this is indeed a phase which will come to pass soon. I also want to thank the Humanists Association of Nigeria who has struggled these past months for Mubarak's release. You have all really shown so much love and care for Mubarak and we really appreciate it."*





## New Members and Associates

The General Assembly voted to welcome 11 new Members and Associates to its global family:

### New Members

1. Estonian Humanist Center
2. Humanists Australia
3. Humanists Barbados
4. Humanists Brazil
5. Humanists Hungary
6. Humanists Malawi

### New Associates

1. Association of Black Humanists
2. Brighton Humanists
3. Burmese Atheists
4. Humanist Ottawa
5. Watford Area Humanists

The General Assembly also confirmed the new membership of ETHOS from Slovakia and the Polish Rationalist Association.

## Board Elections

In addition to welcoming new Members and Associates, the Assembly oversaw the successful re-election of three nominees to Humanists International's Board of Directors.

**Boris van der Ham was confirmed as Treasurer of the organization for the next three years. Commenting on his re-appointment, Boris said:**

*"Thank you to my humanist colleagues around the world for re-electing me as Treasurer for a second term. During my first term we have seen a significant professionalization of the financial management of the organization, as well as sustained annual increase in donations. Over the coming three years we will have an increased focus on institutional donors to help increase our resources, and to expand our sources of income."*

*"Thank you for electing me, and I look forward to another three years working hard to support and promote humanism around the world."*



**Kristin Mile was re-elected as a Board Member. She said on her election:**

*"I am delighted to have been re-elected to the Board of Humanists International for a second term. It is an honor and a privilege to be given such a serious responsibility by my colleagues in the international humanist community."*

**David Pineda commented on his re-election to the Board as follows:**

*"It is an honor to have served on the Board for the last five years, and I am delighted to have been called upon to serve another term. Over the course of my time on the Board we have expanded the scope of the growth and development work we do in less developed countries, and this is something which I am very proud of."*

*"Humanists International is a vibrant and growing organization, and I am very proud to be asked by our global community to serve on the Board once more."*

**During her closing remarks, the Vice-President of Humanists International, Anne-France Ketelaer, said:**

*"The resolutions we passed affirm our commitment to some of our core humanist values. The resolution on vaccine equitability – guided by the high value we place on global solidarity, scientific reasoning, and the fundamental notion that all humans have an equal right to enjoy the benefits of science – could not be more timely or fitting. Whilst, the blasphemy resolution reaffirms our unwavering commitment to the human rights of free thought, free expression and freedom of belief for everyone, along with the enduring conviction that debate, critical thinking and dissent from dogma are key to promoting freedom, human rights, and tolerance for all."*

*"Humanists have been at the forefront of social progress in all areas of the world. This is a legacy of which we should be rightly very proud."*

Anne-France also mentioned that the family of Humanists International is looking forward to meeting once again in Glasgow, from 3 to 5 June 2022, for the next year's General Assembly – the first one in person after more than two years of virtual meetings and conferences.





# Report on activities and achievements

The strategy is underpinned by the Mission and Vision of the organization.

## Our mission

Our mission is to be the global representative body of the humanist movement, uniting a diversity of non-religious organizations and individuals.

## Our vision

We want everyone to live a life of dignity in a world where universal human rights are respected and protected, and where states uphold secularism. We work to build, support and represent the global humanist movement, defending human rights, particularly those of non-religious people, and promoting humanist values worldwide.



**Below is a summary of the key achievements and performance, listed under the four strategic aims:**

**1.**

**We will have successful and sustainable member organizations in every part of the world**

One of the main aims of Humanists International is to ensure that as many people as possible are able to learn about humanism, and live a life true to their humanist beliefs. To that end, we aim to support and nurture the development of national and local humanist organizations in all parts of the world. At the beginning of 2021 we had 117 Members and Associates in 62 countries. At the end of 2021 we had 130 Members and Associates in 64 countries. Of these 130 organizations, 56 were Members (national, democratic, humanist organizations) and 74 were Associates (usually local or specialist humanist organizations).

Despite this sustained growth in Members and Associates around the world, it is still the case that humanists in two-thirds of countries around the world still have no local or national organization that represents them.

In the minority of countries where the establishment of a humanist organization would be illegal, Humanists International offers a free individual membership, enabling those local humanists to be connected with the wider movement.

Humanists International will continue to provide solidarity, support, training and resources, and financial assistance to groups of humanists who wish to establish a new humanist organization.

In 2021, thanks to the generous support of our Members and Associates, and a handful of key donors, we made available a total of 122,000 GBP through a program of grants to which our Members and Associates could apply. The vast majority of these grants are only available to organizations in UN-defined developing economies.

This grants program was open to projects which fit within one or more of the following six areas: organizational development; digital development; regional networking; ceremonies development; young humanists; and our introductory 'pop-up' event program called Café Humaniste.

The project activities in 2021 reached over one million people around the world, from educational videos in Bangla, to LGBTI+ training events in Uganda, and youth engagement in Italy. On average, the projects that we supported achieved 72% of their stated objectives.

A key objective for Humanists International is also to promote and encourage the participation of young people in all our activities around the world; and to encourage our Members and Supporters to do the same.

At the start of 2021, only 40 of our Members and Associates had a dedicated youth manager or coordinator, at the end of 2021 that had risen to 51. Throughout 2021, our youth focused events, such as meetings of local youth volunteer coordinators, had attendance from 318 young people.

Since 2020, Humanists International has employed a part-time Young Humanists Coordinator who, working with the Board and Chief Executive, designs and delivers an annual Work Plan.

At the start of 2021 we reintroduced a monthly email newsletter, to try to improve communication with and between our Members and Associates. Whilst this has been successful, we continue to review the format and impact. The unique open rate of the monthly newsletters has risen steadily throughout 2021 from an average of around 11% to just under 30%. This seems to be in-line with industry averages.

## 2.

## We will create a coordinated global movement by supporting and developing our network

Creating a globally coordinated humanist movement has been a key challenge during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ongoing incarceration of Mubarak Bala, President of the Humanist Association of Nigeria, is one of many cases that the Staff and Board of Humanists International continue to monitor and support actively. Humanists International Board member Dr Leo Igwe continues to lead efforts in Nigeria, coordinating with the legal team and Mubarak's family and friends. Humanists International, working in close partnership with many of our Members and Associates, has briefed many State officials, prominent NGOs, consulted with security experts and sought funding and other support to continue all the campaigning efforts. As of the end of 2021, it remains very difficult to predict the future course of events. However, the Board and Chief Executive are confident that we have the necessary resources, and future plans, to continue playing a key role in the campaign to free Mubarak Bala.

Following the publication of our 2020 'Humanists at Risk: Action Report', we continue to receive an increasing number of applications from individuals at risk. In 2021, the total number of requests received was 259. Throughout 2021, our Humanists at Risk Coordinator supported an average number of 40 cases at any one time. This number was unsustainable, and towards the end of 2021 the Chief Executive and Board agreed a number of changes to these policies to ensure that we can deliver a sustainable casework program that has a reasonable chance of success, more on this in the Future Plans section below.

In 2021, a total of 149 individuals were provided with support which included casework, signposting, or other non-casework intervention. Of this number, 43 of the cases were resolved successfully, meaning that they were provided with all of the support that they had requested. 71% of those to whom we provided in-depth support (such as asylum support letters, emergency grants, or campaigning) report seeing positive developments in their circumstances, at least in part due to our intervention.

In August 2021, following the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, we received an unprecedented number of requests for assistance, as humanist and other progressive activists scrambled to flee. Since we were already oversubscribed, we took the extremely difficult decision to suspend all individual assistance to those still within Afghanistan, and focus our efforts on verifying and supporting individuals who had already crossed the border to a third country. We referred a number of individuals to various fast-track asylum processes with States and other NGOs. This process is likely to continue well into 2022.

Throughout 2021, we provided 14 Members & Associates with data, research, and case studies to support and enable them to lobby their governments or national institutions to recognize the experience of humanists at risk.

We made four applications to other NGOs and agencies on behalf of individuals we were supporting, for other types of support, including cash. From this we received 5,974.00 USD to support them. We held a total of 27 meetings with other NGOs and agencies to brief them on the situation for humanists at risk around the world.

In 2021, we updated 68 country entries in our flagship Freedom of Thought Report. This now means that 75% of countries across the globe have been updated between 2020 —2021. Three Members and Associates planned their own national launch event for the 2021 Freedom of Thought Report, notably Humanists Barbados which received extensive press coverage for it. This is something that we would like to encourage.





The main global launch event was facilitated by the American Humanist Association, and hosted by US Congressman Jamie Raskin at the US Capitol, and included speakers such as Humanists International's Ambassador Gulalai Ismail, and President Andrew Copson. This event was attended by over 160 people, many US Congressional staffers and researchers. Humanists International is very grateful to AHA for executing this event. Over the course of November, the hashtag #FOTR21 reached 233.8K individuals on social media.

2021 saw Humanists International's parent organization in the US apply successfully for a 500,000 USD funding package to support a two-year project aimed at providing security and capacity building training to our Members and Associates in South Asia. This is a major achievement, and will contribute to achieving all our strategic aims.

In 2021, the Chief Executive and Board continued to have discussions following a request from the European Humanist Federation (EHF) to assume responsibility for many of the operations previously undertaken by that organization. The Chief Executive and Board have consulted widely with existing Members and Associates in Europe, and in 2021 all members of EHF that were not currently members of Humanists International were given the option to join using a special fast-track process; only one organization did this. The consultation process was paused in late 2021 following the outcome of the consultations which showed that there was a difference in priority among our European Members and Associates, with some wishing to prioritize humanist services and life-stance activities, and some wishing to prioritize advocacy and the promotion of secularism; all wished to do both. Humanists International is confident that it can design and deliver a service to address both of these important objectives, and is confident that this process can be concluded in the first half of 2022.



## 3.

**We will influence and shape international and regional government policies**

Maintaining relationships with key stakeholders during the pandemic has been especially difficult. Despite these challenges, our Director of Advocacy and our Advocacy Officer have continued to ensure that Humanists International's policies and positions, and the authentic voices of our Members and Associates are heard at key global and regional advocacy institutions.

We made five submissions ahead of high-level UN reports. This included arranging a series of consultation meetings with over 70 representatives of our Members and Associates with the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief ahead of his annual report to the UN General Assembly.

We made a total of 22 statements at the UN Human Rights Council, all of which are available to read on our website.

We developed new working relationships with 11 senior UN officials, helping us to drive forward our work. In addition to this, 21 officials were briefed on issues of concern to Humanists International. We also worked in collaboration with other NGOs on 20 joint initiatives, such as letters, statements, panels and campaigns. This includes an open letter raising concerns about so-called UN

'efficiency savings' that would lead to less space for NGO voices at the Human Rights Council.

We continue to support our Members and Associates to develop their own advocacy activities, to this end we trained representatives from four Members and Associates on how to engage with the UN's 'Universal Periodic Review' process, as well as on advocacy issues more generally.

In July 2021, Humanists International launched a new training tool on the right to freedom of religion or belief: The FoRB Good Practice Guide. Drawing on Humanists International's experience of working on issues around the Right to Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) internationally, the Guide unpacks the right to FoRB, exploring in detail what the right means, and why it matters that humanists and human rights advocates everywhere engage in and advocate for a universal, intersectional and human-rights based understanding of FoRB.

We produced two issue-based briefings for our Members and Associates, as well as issuing over 45 pieces of advocacy communication, such as email updates and news posts.

## 4.

**We have sufficient reputation, resources and effectiveness to achieve our objectives.**

Throughout 2021, Humanists International employed 8 full-time staff. These are supported by a range of part-time and occasional consultants, as well as volunteers, and specialist services such as bookkeeping and IT.

We hosted a six-month internship in our London HQ this year, supported by funds from the Norwegian Humanist Association. This has been a useful and rewarding process.

Humanists International continues to operate on an operational financial deficit, supported by an annual donation from our US-based parent organization. Agreements in place mean that the Board and Chief Executive of Humanists International are confident of future financial income. However, in order to ensure a healthy financial structure, and maintain reserve cash for opportunities and project expenditure, the Chief Executive and Board have set a three-year aim for the core operations of the organization to become self-sustaining. More about this in the future plans section.

# Future plans

In October 2021, the Board and Staff of Humanists International met together in London to review the current strategy, and operations of the organization. Following three days of discussion and presentations, the following changes to the vision and mission were made.

## Vision

Inspired by humanist values, we are optimistic for a world where everyone can have a dignified and fulfilling life.

## Mission

We build, support and represent the global humanist movement and work to champion human rights and secularism.

In addition to this, it was agreed that the values of Humanists International 2020 would be captured in the strategy document:

## Our values

We support democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

The Board and staff further agreed to revise the main four strategic aims of the organization. The two main changes being the inclusion of a new strategic aim on supporting humanists at risk, and the focussing of our advocacy capacity at UN institutions.

The new aims are listed below, and underneath them a summary of the key future plans relating to each of the strategic aims:

## 1.

**Successful and sustainable humanist organizations exist in very part of the world and are networked together**

Humanists International will shift our focus from looking to recruit existing groups into the humanist network, and find new ways to support individuals, or groups of individuals, in forming new groups, especially in countries where we don't already have a Member or Associate. We will also introduce new reporting procedures to monitor the number and proportion of Members and Associates in various global regions.

We will implement a new process for monitoring and evaluating the projects we fund. Alongside this we will also review the effectiveness of our current grants program, and see what changes could be made to deliver more outcomes for the same cash.

The current funds, which make up the majority of cash we distribute in grants, comes from a restricted donor fund, which will run out in the coming years. We will seek to find new sources of funding to support these grant programs.

Heading into 2022, we hope to deliver our first in-person General Assembly since 2019. Humanist Society Scotland have made available 15,000GBP to support us to award travel grants to humanist leaders from developing economies. The Board of Humanists International has agreed to match fund this with 15,000 GBP from core funds.



## 2.

**Humanists are no longer at risk for their beliefs or identity**

Ensuring that humanists can live a life true to their beliefs and identity is now a key strategic aim of Humanists International.

To achieve this, we will expand our activities beyond supporting individuals to a range of activities including lobbying States, other NGOs and agencies to recognise the extent to which humanists, and other non-religious people, are persecuted because of their beliefs. We will aim to add to our evidence and research base with more information and statistics, which we will also make available to our Members and Associates to empower them to lobby their own governments for changes in areas such as asylum policy.

We will support fewer active cases at any one time; with around 10 active cases, and an absolute maximum of 20. We will also narrow the scope of who can access this valuable service to individuals targeted specifically for their humanist beliefs or identity.

In addition to this, we will aim to provide a wider range of public information, signposting and guidance to individuals, with the aim of helping them to access other services which may be more likely to help them.

We will work in close collaboration with our Members and Associates who are active in this area, and support them to develop their operations. We will also be more active in asking other, larger, NGOs to help us with individual cases.

On the 10 years anniversary of its first publication, we will conduct a strategic review of the Freedom of Thought Report to ensure that it is fit for purpose. In order to enable us to do this effectively, we will reduce the number of country reports that we update in 2022, to only 10. We also hope to secure additional funding to support this project, so if possible we will update more.

The End Blasphemy Laws campaign has been largely dormant in recent years. Significant updates were made in 2020 and 2021. In order to facilitate the change in strategic focus, it is expected that there will be little future work on this campaign. A funding proposal will be put together, for the purpose of securing consortium funding from a range of freedom of expression, freedom of religion or belief, and other like minded NGOs, to hire a full-time campaigns officer to drive this work forward.



## 3.

**Human rights priorities based on humanist values are influential at international institutions**

As the profile and reputation of Humanists International has grown in recent years, the level of scrutiny has also increased. In order to ensure that we are not 'spread too thin', we will focus the efforts of our own advocacy activities on the United Nations institutions.

We will support our Members and Associates to engage with other regional and national advocacy institutions. We will also see a more general strategic shift to working much more closely with Members and Associates, and supporting them through training and briefing activities.

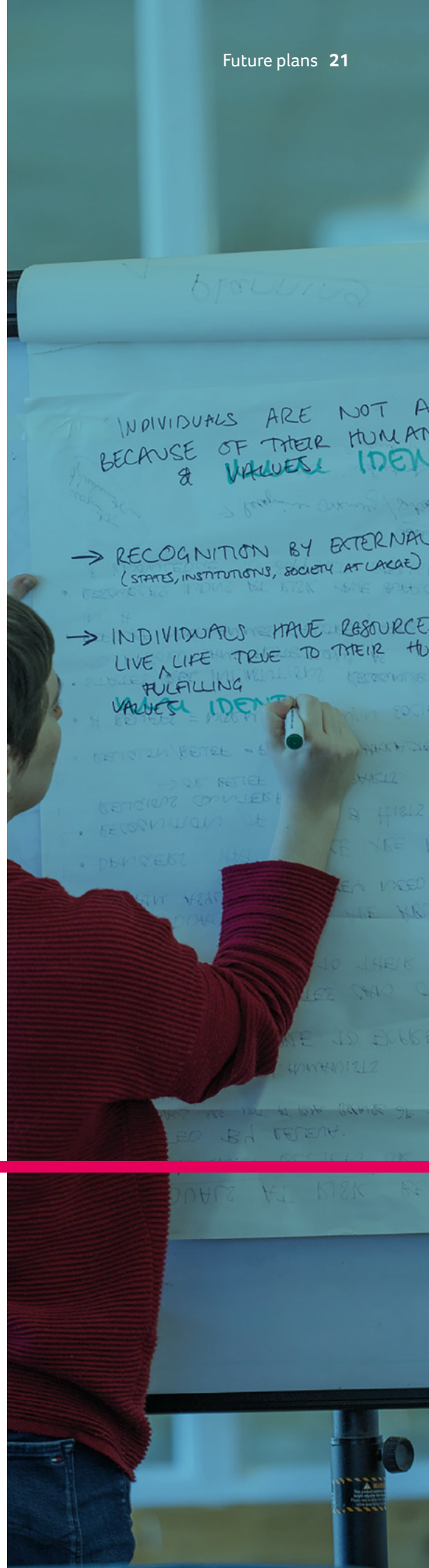
4.

## We have sufficient reputation, resources and effectiveness to achieve our objectives.

In 2022 we will shift towards ensuring that our core staff and operations are sustainable year-on-year, freeing up investment income and reserve funds for project investment and opportunistic activities. We will aim to do this over the next three years.

One of the ways we will achieve this is by increasing the number of individual donors and supporters we have. Following a successful pilot in North America in 2021, the Chief Executive and Board are content that increasing this income source will not in any way negatively impact the fundraising opportunities for our national Members and Associates, and will give the organization an important and reliable source of core funding.

Like many organizations, during the pandemic we allowed all personnel to work remotely. This has been very successful, with staff reporting a positive impact on their wellbeing, and productivity and performance improving also. An additional benefit is that it has allowed us to hire new personnel from different parts of the world, and ensure that staff are all treated fairly. This flexible and remote working will continue to be an important feature of the organization going forward, and will help to make it an attractive place to work.



# Our members and associates

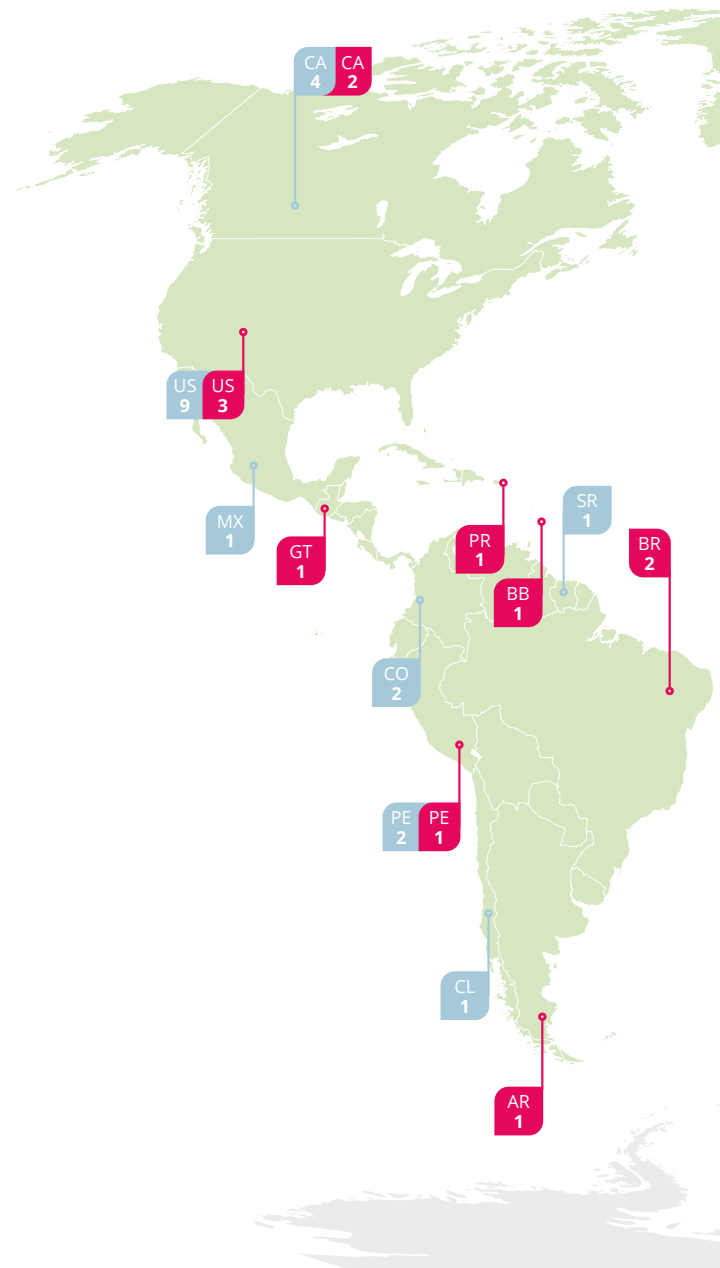
## New members in 2021:

Estonian Humanist Centre  
Humanists Australia  
Humanists Barbados  
Humanists Brazil  
Humanists Hungary  
Humanists Malawi  
ETHOS (Slovakia)  
Polish Rationalist Association  
Association of Black Humanists  
Brighton Humanists  
Burmese Atheists  
Humanist Ottawa  
Watford Area Humanists  
**PICH**  
(to be ratified in 2022)  
**Kenya Humanist Alliance**  
(to be ratified in 2022)

The following organizations did not renew their membership in 2022:

**Association for Humanism (Spain)**  
**Philippine Atheism Agnosticism and Secularism**  
**Rationalist Association of New South Wales in Sydney**

Members  
Associates  
To be ratified in 2022



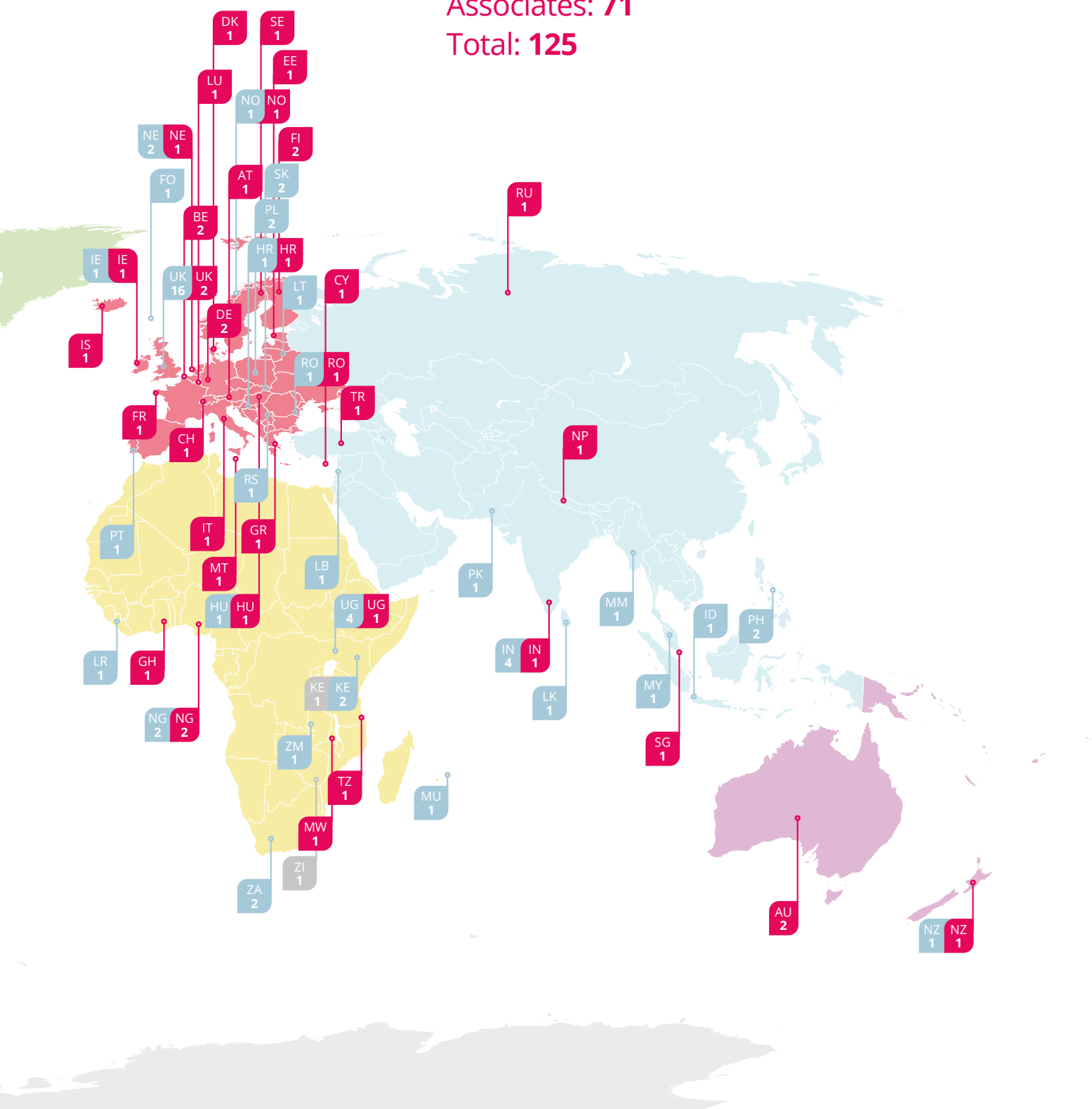


At the end of 2021,  
Humanists International's  
ratified membership was:

Members: **54**

Associates: **71**

Total: **125**



# Growth and development

## Humanist Development Grants

**In March 2021, we awarded a total of £50,491 from the Humanist Development Fund to support the projects of eight humanist organizations worldwide.**

1. **£10,000** was awarded to Uganda Humanist Association to support the base line survey and capacity building for humanists organizations in Uganda. The project managed to reach and physically interview 576 people amid the the ongoing pandemic, and brought together 120 humanists leaders during the two capacity building workshops.
2. **£9,694** was awarded to Humanist Association for Leadership, Equity and Accountability (HALEA) to not only promote women's rights and advocate for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), but to shape young people's reasoning and critical thinking skills as well. Through this project, 511 women and young girls have received proper sanitary materials, and in total, managed to reach out to 1,174 project beneficiaries.
3. **£5,000** was awarded to Faithless Hijabi to support humanists at risk by offering free sessions of therapy, to work through their fragile mental health as changing identities and pressure and emotional abuse from religious families bring about. In total, the project supported 28 individuals for sessions between 8 to 12.
4. **£5,000** was awarded to Freethought Lebanon to advance the organization's growth with well-established internal governance procedures, clear membership guidelines, and increased effectiveness in promoting the humanist mission.
5. **£5,910** was awarded to Filipino Freethinkers to redesign their website and including the creation of three new toolkit modules tailored to support the work of humanist activists in the Philippines, namely, Advocating Humanism, Non-Discrimination and Inclusivity, and Provide Humanists at Risk Care.
6. **£4,605** was awarded to Freedom Center Uganda in training participants on their rights according to regional and international human rights instruments, and demonstrated how religious beliefs can never provide legitimate grounds to discriminate against others.
7. **£3,572** was awarded to Secular Humanist Society of Peru to conduct two humanist research workshop that will train around 50 humanist researchers. The project also produced 200 copies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution Book and the completion of the Future Now Journal with an average of 100 downloads per day during the initial launch.
8. **£6,710** was awarded to Humanists Guatemala to initially organize three 6-week online workshops in Spanish for humanists in Guatemala and all over Latin America, with the goal of fostering critical thinking and a healthy skepticism, however, was later modified to create a series of workshop to hone the interest of children in art, science, and technology. The project will conclude in July 2022.



## Digital Humanist Grants

**2021 was the pioneering year where we launched the Digital Humanist Grant. We awarded a total of £27,653**

to fund projects online meant to spread the humanist message in developing countries, mainly through social media or any other digital environment.

1. **£10,000** was awarded to Think School to produce a series of 14 open-license videos on the climate crisis in both Bangla and English. The project was well received online had a Youtube engagement reaching to about a million with thousands of views from around the world.
2. **£4,980** was awarded to Freethought Lebanon to enhance their online presence through the creation of social media cards and video production to promote humanist themes.
3. **£4,508** was awarded to Filipino Freethinkers to conduct various activities that aim to educate audiences about the challenges faced by humanists, non-believers and other religion or belief minorities.
4. **£4,165** was awarded to Secular Humanist Society of Peru to produce "Marginales TV", a digital video channel with live programs that promotes secular humanism, critical thinking, evidence-based decision-making and constructive conversation. The project was able to deliver four shows and the production of 130 graphic posts.
5. **£4,000** was awarded to Humanists & Atheists of Zambia to initially sought the creation of a 12-episode podcast to spread humanism in Zambia, however, was cancelled after due to organizational challenges.







## Humanist Ceremonies Grants

We awarded a grant of **£1,700.00** to Humanists Guatemala to introduce humanist ceremonies in the country and to train new professional humanist celebrants in Guatemala. However, the project was not realized due to logistical challenges.

## Regional Networking Meetings Grants

In 2021, we awarded a total of **£9,265** to fund two organizations to conduct humanist meetings and events on a regional/linguistic/thematic basis in developing countries.

1. **£4,980.00** was awarded to Filipino Freethinkers to host the Online Asian Humanism Conference 2021. The event invited international and local humanist speakers with 200 Zoom meetings attendees and around 900 views on social media.
2. **£4,285.71** was awarded to Humanist Association of Nigeria to hold a meeting to promote positive communication, mutual trust, understanding and tolerance of persons of faith and no faith, in conjunction with the Interfaith Mediation Centre of Nigeria. The event has welcomed around 38 attendees of various beliefs and religion.

## Young Humanist Grants

In 2021, we awarded a total of **£7,860** from the Young Humanist Grant Fund to support the projects of three humanist organizations around the world.

1. **£4,000.00** was awarded to the Union of Rationalist Atheists and Agnostics to deliver two online workshops to train the next generation of young humanists on social media management and other skills to run a successful humanist youth section.
2. **£2,860.00** was awarded to Filipino Freethinkers to support young humanists, especially those who are planning to publicly come out as humanists, those who are in the process of coming out, and those who have just recently come out.
3. **£1,000.00** was awarded to Humanist Alliance Philippines, International to organize a series of webinars and live meetings to connect young humanists and train the next generation of humanist advocates in the Philippines.

# Humanists At Risk

Between January – December 2021,  
259 people reached out to us for help.

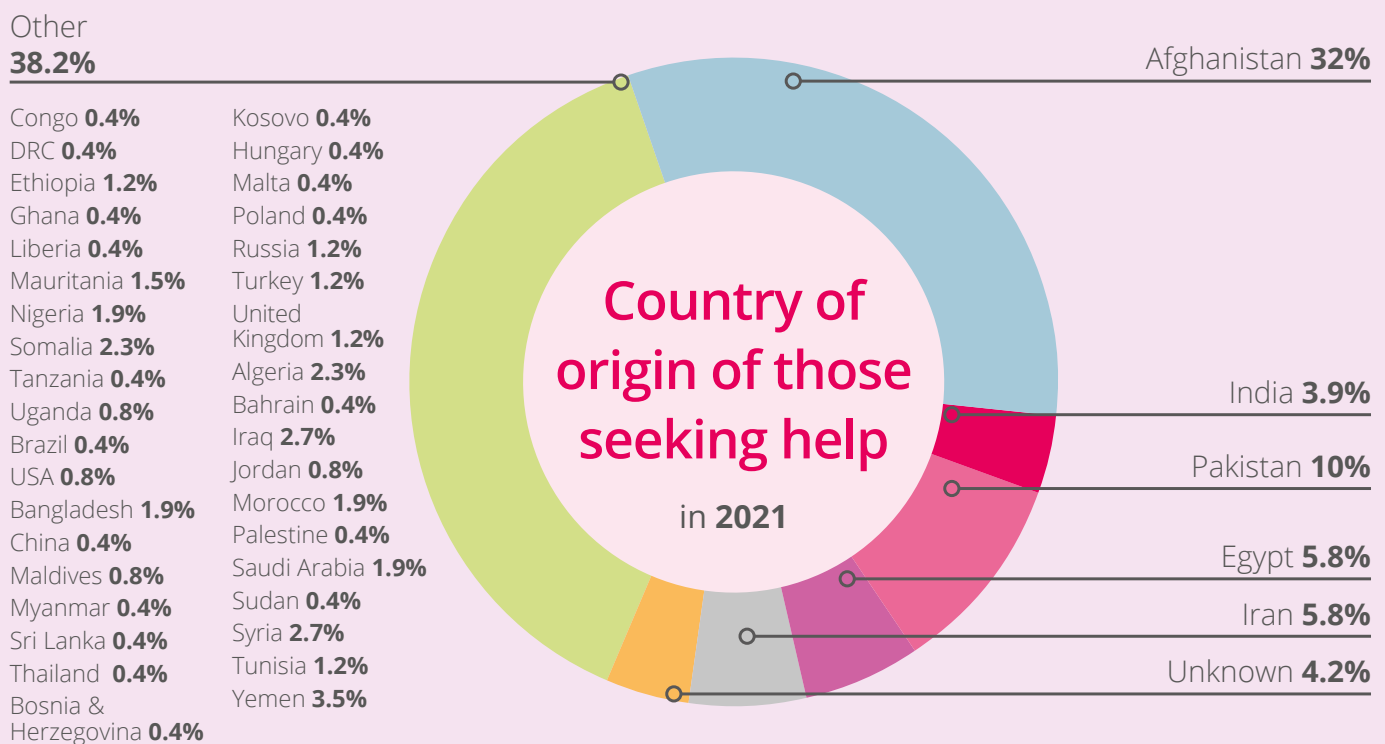
Most of them told us they lived their lives “in the closet” – hiding their beliefs, unable to live true to their values, and fearing the consequences of their true views being exposed. The majority of those reaching out to us, sought assistance and/or advice regarding relocation and asylum.



## Spotlight on Afghanistan

**The fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban in August 2021 made an already difficult tense situation for Afghan atheists and humanists acutely dangerous.**

**83 Afghans reached out to us for help fleeing from the country with their immediate family members; the majority are university professors, engineers, journalists, women's rights activists, doctors and students. They accounted for more than 30% of all the requests for help we received in the year. All told, an estimated 300 Afghan people seeking our help.**

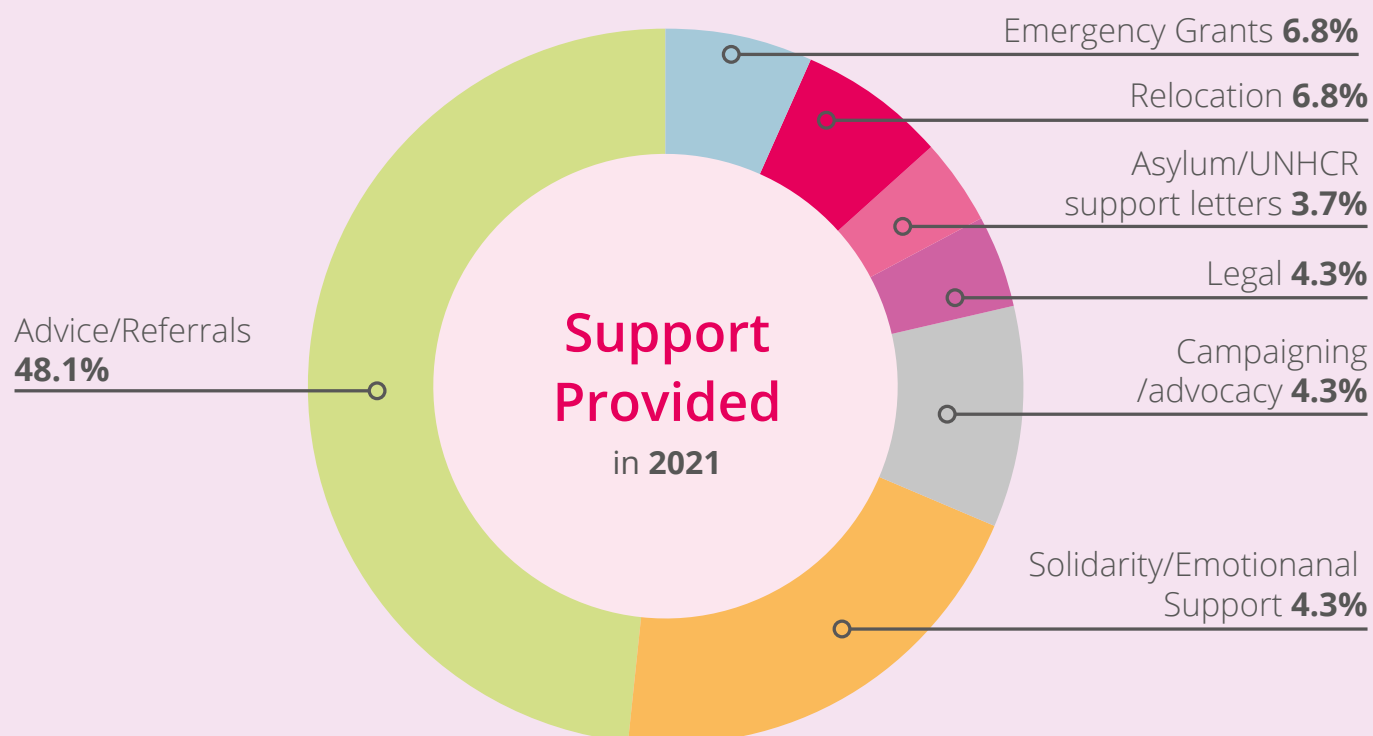


Few of them had the financial resources to flee or maintain themselves abroad for a protracted period of time. We compiled lists of verified Afghan humanists and non-religious people and shared them with our diplomatic contacts for inclusion on evacuation lists. We provided advice on where to seek help. But the unfortunate reality was that – with one member of staff – we could not help everyone.

Once evacuation programs closed, we focussed our energies on supporting those who had made it out of the country. The time taken to achieve relocation from a neighboring country has often meant that their situations were materially changing and in some cases became emergent.

Over the course of 2021, we provided assistance to 149 people from across the globe, about a quarter of whom we provided support to over a period of months. Of those, 71% reported improvements in their circumstances, at least in part owing to our interventions in their case, be it through the provision of emergency grants, letters supporting their asylum claims, or other forms of support we offer. Crucial to this work was our ability to connect individuals at risk with groups on the ground (our Members and Associates) who were able to provide practical support and advice.





### Key success stories have been:

- Afghan humanist Josef Moradi was granted asylum in Norway
- Charges dropped against writer Shakthika Sathkumara and Indika Rathnayake
- Pakistani atheist Mommad granted asylum in Greece
- Investigation against Cypriot artist George Gavriel dropped

As an organization, we recognize the duty of care we have to all our staff who come into contact with people who have experienced trauma. We take our work to support them and our staff seriously, so we conducted an organization-wide training in Vicarious Trauma and Resilience.

In the coming year, our Humanists at Risk Coordinator looks forward to the opportunity to deliver in-person training on physical, digital and psychosocial security to some of our Members in Nepal and Sri Lanka. She hopes it will be the first of many such training sessions that we can deliver globally to support our members across the globe that are operating in environments hostile to their very existence.

# Finances

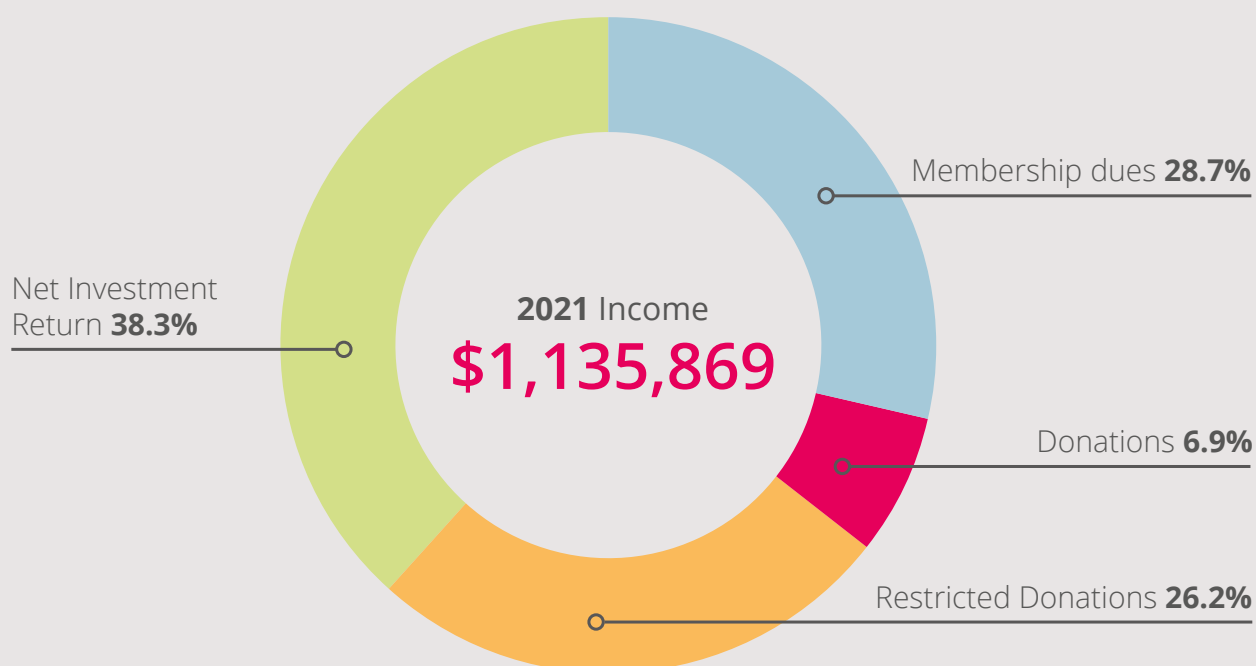
In 2020, International Humanists and Ethical Union's (IHEU, company number FC020642, now closed) organization structure changed to two entities:

- **Humanists International 2020** (UK entity, company number SC682230; charity number SC050629), and
- **Humanists International, Inc.** (US entity, 501(c)3 52-2194803)

Following this change, the first US audit on the two entities' consolidated accounts was conducted for the financial year ended 31 December 2021.



## Income



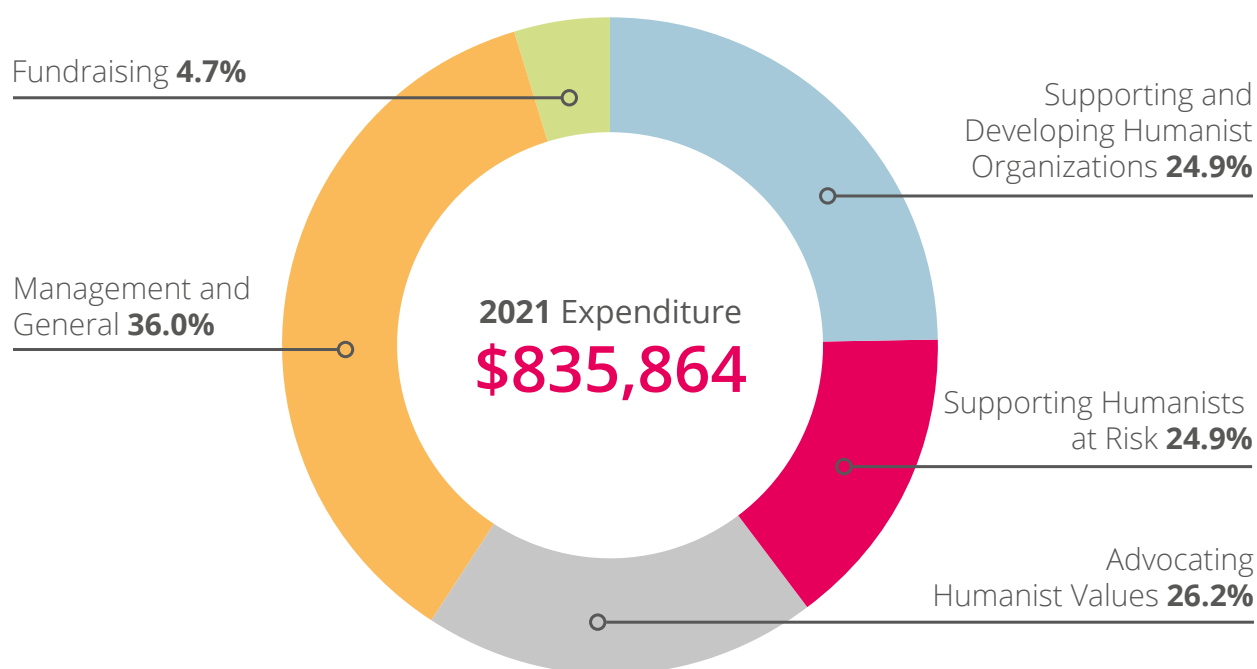
**The global economy has been slowly and gradually recovering from the negative impact experienced in previous years during the pandemic. At the end of 2021, we saw a 7.02% increase in Humanists International's funds compared to what we had on 1 January 2021.**

There have been three noticeable incomes: 1) Investment income \$435,389, 2) Total Membership income \$325,439, and 3) Total Humanists at Risk income \$32,578.

By the end of 2021, \$162,000 was the remaining Restricted Growth and Development Fund and to be spent as two annual tranches of \$81,000 for 2022 and 2023.

This year, we only achieved 51% of the fundraising targets on average. However, fundraising for the Humanists at Risk project has been going well, with 96% achievement. In order to have a sustainable and healthy financial position, we have been planning to recruit a Fundraising and Development Manager next year to meet the target and increase our income for 2022.

## Expenditure





## Summary of Expenditure on Activities (\$)

	Total 2021
Supporting and Developing Humanist Organizations	208,052
Supporting Humanists at Risk	125,436
Advocating Humanist Values	162,340
Management and General	300,815
Fundraising	39,221
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$835,864</b>



## Income and Expenditure (\$)

	£ Unrestricted	£ Restricted	£ Endowment	£ Total
<b>Income</b>				
Membership dues	325,439	-	-	325,439
Donations	77,852	297,177	-	375,029
Interest	12	-	-	12
Net investment return	-	435,389	-	435,389
<b>Total income</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$1,135,869</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>				
Personnel	-	-	-	403,557
Professional fees	-	-	-	149,980
Office expenses	-	-	-	22,765
Conferences and meetings	-	-	-	22,188
Insurance	-	-	-	623
Occupancy	-	-	-	27,655
Advertising	-	-	-	440
Information technology	-	-	-	31,991
Miscellaneous	-	-	-	532
Grants and assistance	-	-	-	176,133
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$835,864</b>
<b>Net income/(deficit)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$835,864</b>
Exchange (losses)	(10,118)	-	-	(10,118)
Net assets released	996,222	(996,222)	-	0
<b>Net Movement in Funds</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$289,887</b>
Balance at January 1, 2021	-	-	-	4,128,636
<b>Balance at December 31, 2021</b>	<b>\$915,184</b>	<b>562,741</b>	<b>2,940,598</b>	<b>\$4,418,523</b>

*This financial summary has been extracted from the organization's audited consolidated accounts. Copies of the US and the UK audited accounts are available on our website.*











Humanists International, Inc. is a US not-for-profit 501-c(3) registered in New York. Registered address: 1821 Jefferson Pl NW, Washington, DC 20036.

Humanists International is also the trading name of Humanists International 2020, a Scottish (UK) charity no. SC050629. Registered address: 272 Bath Street, Glasgow, G4 2JR, UK. Principal Office: 17 Oval Way, London, SE11 5RR, UK.

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