



Empowering Humanists:

# Building a Global Movement

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ANNUAL REPORT 2023



**Humanists**  
INTERNATIONAL



# President's foreword

## Building a Stronger Humanist World

2023 saw significant progress on every front in our mission to champion humanism and empower humanist communities worldwide.



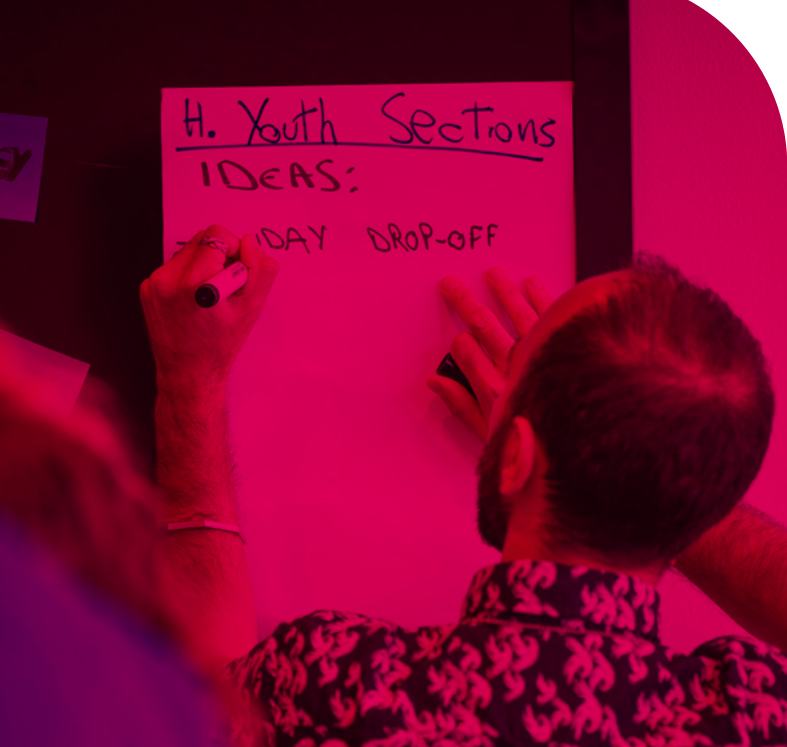
Our network grew, with new member organizations joining our cause. We continued to empower humanist organizations, particularly in developing countries, to flourish through our support programmes. We stimulated and supported a rise in member-driven advocacy efforts at the UN, highlighting the growing influence of humanist values on the international stage.

We want to achieve even more in the year to come and remain committed to and focussed on our key objectives:

- **Building a thriving global humanist network:** securing sustainable funding for our growth programs and developing online training resources to strengthen our members' capacity.
- **Protecting humanists at risk:** finding new ways to optimize the allocation of our resources and empowering our network to better assist humanists facing persecution.
- **Amplifying humanist voices at international institutions:** collaborating with our European members to shape a new advocacy strategy for their region and continue supporting regional and international efforts everywhere.
- **Ensuring a strong and sustainable organization:** working with our members to revitalize the General Assembly and establish a robust framework for future leadership transitions.

I am confident that, working together, we can do our bit to make a world where humanism flourishes and everyone has the freedom to live according to their values.

**Andrew Copson**  
President, Humanists International





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# Chief Executive's introduction

Dear friends and supporters  
of Humanists International,

It is my pleasure to present to you the 2023 Annual Report of Humanists International. As Chief Executive, I am honored to share with you the many accomplishments and challenges that we faced in the past year as we continued to advocate for human rights, secularism, and rational thinking around the world.

In 2023, we continued to work tirelessly to promote humanist values and principles, defending the rights of the non-religious and challenging religious privilege wherever it exists. We have remained steadfast in our commitment to advocating for the freedom of thought, conscience, and expression, and promoting the importance of critical thinking and evidence-based reasoning.

Our team has continued to advance our mission in a wide range of areas. From providing vital support to humanists and secularists at risk around the world, to campaigning against the criminalization of blasphemy and apostasy, to promoting secular education and fighting against discrimination based on religion or belief, we have remained at the forefront of the humanist movement.

We are also proud to have continued our efforts to build stronger partnerships and collaborations with other like-minded organizations and individuals around the world. This has allowed us to have an even greater impact in our advocacy work and has helped us to build a stronger, more connected humanist community.

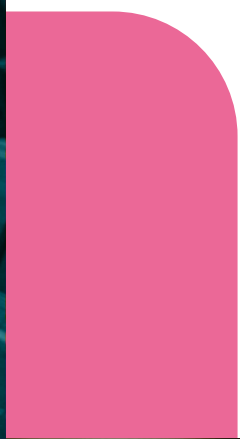
As you read this report, I hope you will share in our pride at the many achievements we have made, and the impact that we have had in advancing humanist values around the world. I also hope that you will continue to support us in our mission as we work towards a world where reason, compassion, and human rights are at the forefront of our shared values.

Thank you for your ongoing support, and I hope you enjoy reading this report.



**Gary McLelland**  
Chief Executive, Humanists International





# Our mission and values

## Vision

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

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## Mission

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

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## Our values

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



# Our Board



**President:**  
Andrew Copson  
United Kingdom

Appointed 6 September 2022



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

Appointed 6 August 2023



**Vice-president:**  
Roslyn Mould  
Ghana



**Treasurer:**  
Boris Van Der Ham  
Netherlands

Appointed 6 August 2023



Alavari Jeevathol  
United Kingdom

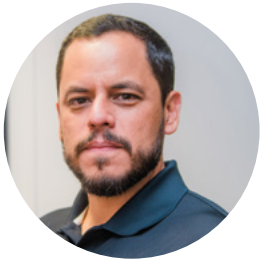
Until 6 August 2023



Ana Raquel Aquilo Smith  
Guatemala



Apsara Karki  
Nepal



David Pineda  
Guatemala



Debbie Goddard  
United States  
of America

Until 26 June 2023



Kristin Mile  
Norway



Leo Igwe  
Nigeria

Appointed 6 August 2023



Maggie Ardiente  
United States  
of America

Appointed 6 August 2023



Nina Fjeldheim  
Norway







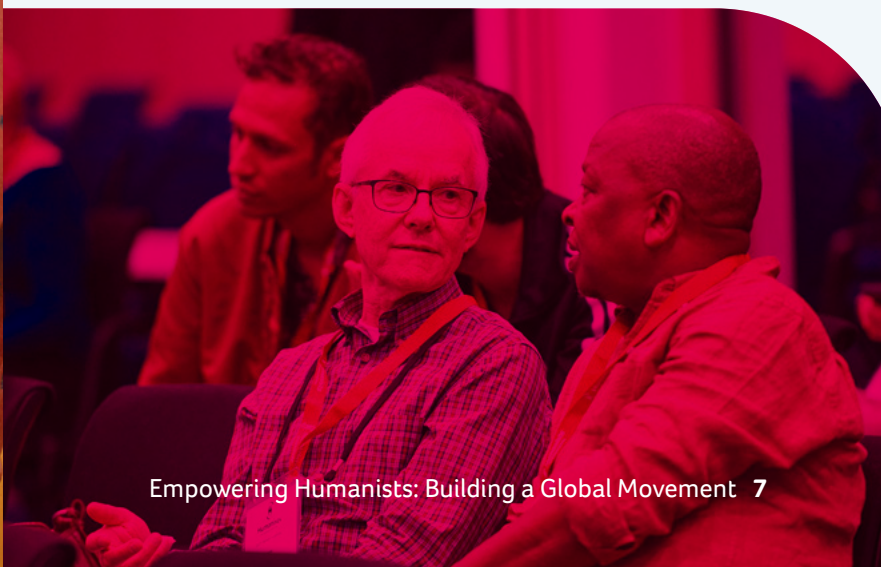
Humanists International, Inc. is a US not-for-profit 501-c(3) registered in New York. Registered address: 1821 Jefferson Pl NW, Washington, DC 20036. The Board of Directors meets six times per year to agree and monitor the organization's strategy and activities, including risk management and performance.

Humanists International has a Board Handbook, which sets out role descriptions for the officers of the Board, code of conduct, conflict of interest policy and a policy for Board member expenses.

On appointment, new Board members sign the declaration, committing them to give their time and expertise. An induction programme for new Board members includes an initial meeting with the President and Chief Executive to discuss issues of relevance to the organization, the history of the organization and its purposes and the roles and responsibilities of the board. New Board members are given a copy of recent board minutes, a copy of the most recent accounts, a copy of the Bylaws and copies of the Office of the New York State Attorney General's "Responsibilities from the start – responsibilities of not-for-profit corporations".

All Board members give their time freely and no remuneration was paid to Board members in the year. Board members are required to disclose all relevant interests at each board meeting and, in accordance with the organization's policy, withdraw from decisions where a conflict of interest arises.

Humanists International has developed a risk management process that allows the identification, assessment and management of significant risks, which may impact on the achievement of their objectives. The board and staff meet once per year in October to review the risks and risk management arrangements annually, in addition to the board's regular quarterly reviews. The Board members have assessed the major risks to which the organization is exposed and they are confident that going forward, exposure to major risks will be mitigated.



# Our personnel



**Chief Executive:**  
Gary McLelland



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



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



**Membership Development Officer & Young Humanists Coordinator:**  
Javan Lev Poblador



**Finance and Operations Manager:**  
Jean Zong



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

(Until 27 April 2023)



**Advocacy Officer:**  
Lillie Ashworth

(Until 31 December 2023)



**Humanist Professionals Network Manager:**  
Lone Ree Milkær

(Until 31 December 2023)



**Program Manager:**  
Rachel Abrego



**Advocacy Officer (Europe):**  
Tania Giacomuzzi Mota



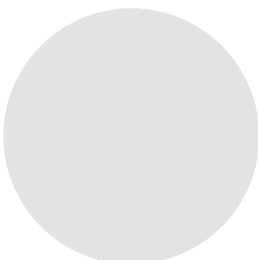
**Fundraising and Development Manager:**  
Victoria Howson

(From 4 September 2023)



**Advocacy Officer:**  
Leon Langdon

(From 31 October 2023)



**Social Media Consultant:**  
Paul Daniel Serrano

(From 1 June to 31 August 2023)



**Social Media Consultant:**  
Rustam Singh



# Report on the General Assembly

From 3rd to 6th August 2023, over 400 delegates from 43 countries took part in the World Humanist Congress, the first in-person Congress to take place since 2014.

The Congress was organized by the Danish Humanist Society (Humanistisk Samfund) in collaboration with four other Nordic humanist organizations, including the Norwegian Humanist Association (Human-Etisk Forbund), the Union of Freethinkers of Finland (Vapaa ajattelijat), Humanists Sweden (Humanisterna) and the Icelandic Ethical Humanist Association (Sidmennt). In keeping with the theme of “Building better democracies” delegates shared their experiences and learning on a range of issues from ‘Challenges to democracy in Africa’ to ‘The threat to democracy from conspiracy thinking’. Speakers included Sandi Toksvig, Andrew Copson, Nicole Carr, CEO of the American Humanist Association, artist Victoria Gugenheim, Leo Igwe, philosopher Lars Fredrik Svendsen, and Remus Cernea, journalist reporting from Ukraine.

During the Congress, the delegates discussed and adopted a new declaration on “Democracy: a humanist value”, which was later adopted by the General Assembly. The General Assembly also passed a more timely resolution, referring to the challenges to democracy around the world at the present time. During the General Assembly, an emergency resolution was proposed by Humanists UK, in conjunction with several Indian delegates, on the restoration of armed protection for Prof. Narendra Nayak. This final resolution was adopted unanimously.



**During the Congress’ Gala Dinner, Andrew Copson, President of Humanists International, presented the 2023 Distinguished Service to Humanism Award to retiring Board member Kristin Mile. During the presentation, he said:**

*“Kristin Mile’s achievements are not confined to her organizational roles alone. She has been a tireless advocate for human rights, tirelessly working to ensure that the principles of humanism are upheld in society. Her voice has resonated in countless debates, conferences, and public forums, as she fearlessly championed the rights of the marginalized, fought against discrimination, and tirelessly worked towards a more inclusive and compassionate world.”*

*“Kristin’s impact as a leader, advocate, and ambassador for humanism is immeasurable. Her work has touched the lives of countless individuals, offering solace, support, and a sense of belonging to those who have felt marginalized or ignored. Her compassion knows no bounds, and her commitment to promoting humanist values remains unwavering.”*

At the democratic heart of the Congress, Humanists International's General Assembly 2023 was also held, counting on the participation of 130 delegates from 27 countries; among them representatives of Members and Associates, staff and Board Members of Humanists International.

Sadly, Anne-France Ketelaer, Vice-President of Humanists International was unable to attend the Congress. In her absence she was awarded with the 2023 Distinguished Service to Humanism Award. As she was retiring from the Board, the President, Andrew Copson, gave this testimonial in her absence:

*"As Anne-France prepares to step down from her role as Vice President of Humanists International, we take this moment to reflect upon her extraordinary achievements and the profound impact she has had on our collective efforts to build a better world. Through her visionary leadership and unwavering dedication, she has elevated the cause of humanism to new heights."*

*"Anne-France, your contributions to the advancement of humanism are immeasurable. Your passion, empathy, and commitment to the principles of humanism have inspired us all to continue the fight for a more just and humane world. Today, as we present you with the 2023 Distinguished Services to Humanism Award, we honor not only your incredible work but also the hope and inspiration you have instilled in all of us."*

The Award was collected by Yan Dheur in her absence.

During his opening remarks, President of Humanists International, Andrew Copson, stated:

*"The theme of this Congress reminds us that humanist values have the power to overcome the challenges of our time. We believe in the inherent potential of humanity to create positive change, to forge inclusive societies that respect individual freedoms and uphold human rights. We have the tools, the knowledge, and the collective will to confront the pressing issues of our era and shape a brighter future."*

“

*Together, we can address the climate crisis, economic inequalities, and the persistent threat of bigotry and discrimination. By celebrating diversity, promoting education, and supporting the marginalized, we can build societies that thrive on compassion, reason, and evidence-based decision-making."*

**Uttam Niraula, Ambassador of Humanists International**

Uttam Niraula, Ambassador of Humanists International, also gave a welcome speech to the General Assembly, during which he said:

*"In today's world, where populist narratives and divisive rhetoric seem to dominate political landscapes, our responsibility as humanists becomes all the more crucial. We must stand as a beacon of reason, challenging dogma and superstition, and advocating for evidence-based decision-making. By championing critical thinking, rationality, and science, we can counter the spread of misinformation and ensure that policies are grounded in truth and compassion."*

During the General Assembly Board elections, Aparajita Karki (nominated by Society for Humanism Nepal) was elected for the first time, following her co-option by the Board in 2022. Debbie Goddard (nominated by American Atheists), and Leo Igwe (nominated by the Humanist Association of Nigeria) were both re-elected to the Board again. Alavari Jeevathol (AJ – nominated by Humanists UK), Maggie Ardiente (nominated by American Humanist Association), and Nina Fjeldheim (nominated by Norwegian Humanist Association) were all elected for the first time to the Board. All the elected Board members will serve a three year term from 2023 to 2026.



Roslyn Mould was elected as the new Vice-President of Humanists International. In her closing remarks as Vice-President-Elect, Roslyn paid tribute to her predecessor:

*“Before we proceed, I would like to take a moment to pay tribute to an exceptional individual who has been a guiding light for our organization. Anne-France Ketelaer, our outgoing Vice-President, is an inspiration to us all. Her unwavering dedication to the humanist cause has left an indelible mark on Humanists International and the global humanist community. Unfortunately, Anne-France is unable to be present at this General Assembly, but her legacy and the impact of her work continue to resonate within the very fabric of our organization. Let us give her a heartfelt round of applause for her selfless service and unwavering commitment.”*

She then went on to say:

*“As we move forward, let us be reminded that the path towards progress is often challenging, but it is our shared commitment and determination that will drive us forward. Together, we have the power to create positive change and advocate for the causes we hold dear. It is up to us to be the change we wish to see in the world.”*

*“Humanists International is more than just an organization; it is a collective force for good. Our global network of humanist organizations and individuals has the potential to be a transformative force in shaping a brighter future for humanity.”*



The 2023 World Humanist Congress, gathered in Copenhagen, adopted the following declaration on Democracy: a humanist value:

Humans are social animals, formed by evolution and culture to live together with others in society.

For society to function, it needs norms, laws and regulations. As society changes, these need always to be open to challenge and updating as the result of an ongoing ethical conversation and rational debate.

Democracy, which is founded on the principle of the equal value, dignity, and right to participate of every individual, is a humanist way of organizing that conversation and debate.

As humanists, we maintain that democracy should be a fundamental value upheld and protected by all societies and governments. Everyone should be heard with equal dignity and respect, and the democratic process provides a framework for ensuring that this principle is upheld in practice. It guarantees that there can be no legitimate government anywhere without the fully informed consent and participation of those being governed.

Democracy is not just a political process. With its emphasis on equality and participation, democracy is a powerful tool for the realization of social justice, human dignity, and the common good.

Democracy is not a static situation. It is a dynamic process that requires constant engagement, informed participation, and adjustment.

Democracy is not the tyranny of the majority. It must go together with human rights protections, the rule of law, and a commitment to social progress.

**In light of these principles, we affirm the following:**

1. Democracy is a universal fundamental value that is essential to the realization of humanist principles worldwide.
2. Democracy must be broadly inclusive, transparent, accountable, and secular, with institutions and practices that are responsive to the changing needs and aspirations of citizens.
3. Citizens must be empowered and the right to exercise citizenship must be protected without prejudice.
4. Democracy as a culture must be actively defended against all threats, including those from regimes, movements and political parties that embrace authoritarian principles, from those with unaccountable economic and social power, and from all other forces that seek to undermine democratic values and institutions.

**We commit ourselves to working for a more democratic world.**

**We call on all governments, institutions, and individuals to uphold and protect democratic values as a cornerstone of human dignity, justice, and freedom.**

**We call on all humanists around the world to stand in solidarity with those who are struggling to defend and promote democracy, and to work together to build a world in which democracy flourishes and the dignity and rights of all people are protected.**



The General Assembly also passed two more resolutions: “General Assembly Resolution on Democracy” and “Emergency Resolution Calling for the Restoration of Protection for Narendra Nayak”. These can be read online at <https://humanists.international/what-we-do/policies/>.

The General Assembly ratified the application of the following new Members:

**Ethical Society of Zambia**

**Free Thought Association (Namibia)**

**Kenya Humanists**

**Czech Humanists**

And the following new Associates:

**Chanan Development Association**

**Stockport Humanists**

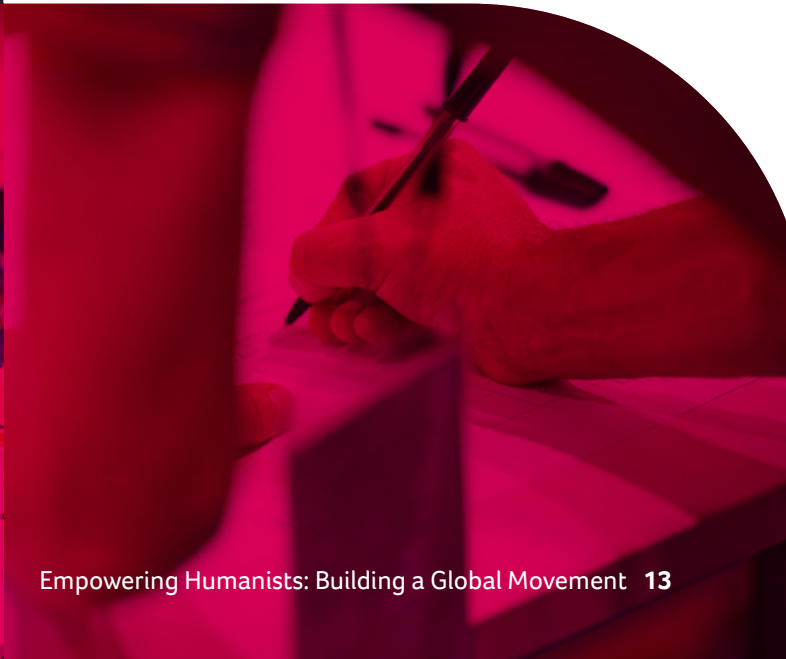
**Humanist Association of Toronto**

**Ruhiira Humanist Initiative For  
Community Development**

**Accra Atheists**

**Secular Coalition for America**

Also, during the General Assembly, changes were approved to the bylaws of the organization.



# Report on activities and achievements



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

## **1** Successful and sustainable humanist organisations exist in every part of the world and are networked together

Humanists International saw growth between 2022 and 2023. We began 2023 with 121 total organizations, consisting of 62 member organizations and 59 associate organizations. By the end of 2023, this number had grown to 127 organizations, with 64 members and 63 associates.

For humanists in the few countries where starting a humanist organization is illegal, Humanists International offers free individual memberships. This allows them to stay connected to the global humanist movement.

Humanists International remains committed to helping new humanist organizations get started. We provide support in various ways, including training, resources, and financial aid. To improve this process, the Board created a working group in Q3. This group, called the "Aim 1 Working Group," will review current activities and suggest changes. The Board aims to share the group's findings at the 2024 General Assembly in Singapore.

In 2023, Humanists International invested over £95K in its Growth & Development program. This program empowers our member and associate organizations in developing countries, as defined by the UN, to undertake critical projects. These projects focus on

various areas such as strengthening organizational structures, promoting digital advancements, fostering regional collaboration, developing humanist ceremonies, engaging young humanists, and introducing new communities to humanism through our "Cafe Humaniste" pop-up events.

Our Grants Program has had a significant impact, reaching over 65,000 beneficiaries in 2023. By the end of the year, we received positive reports indicating that 9 projects funded through the program were successfully completed on schedule.

Humanists International prioritizes involving young people (aged 35 and under) in the global humanist movement through a dedicated project. This focus on youth engagement is evident in the growth of our program. In 2023, the number of our Members and Associates with a designated youth manager increased from 52 to 60. Throughout the year, 125 young people actively participated in our youth-oriented activities.

Throughout 2023 discussions took place with the Norwegian Humanist Association about the future of the Humanist Professionals Development Network. It was agreed that the Network would continue as a bilateral partnership between the participating organizations with support and encouragement from Humanists International. Humanists International will continue to attend the annual meetings of the Network and is ready to engage further in any way which might be of assistance.

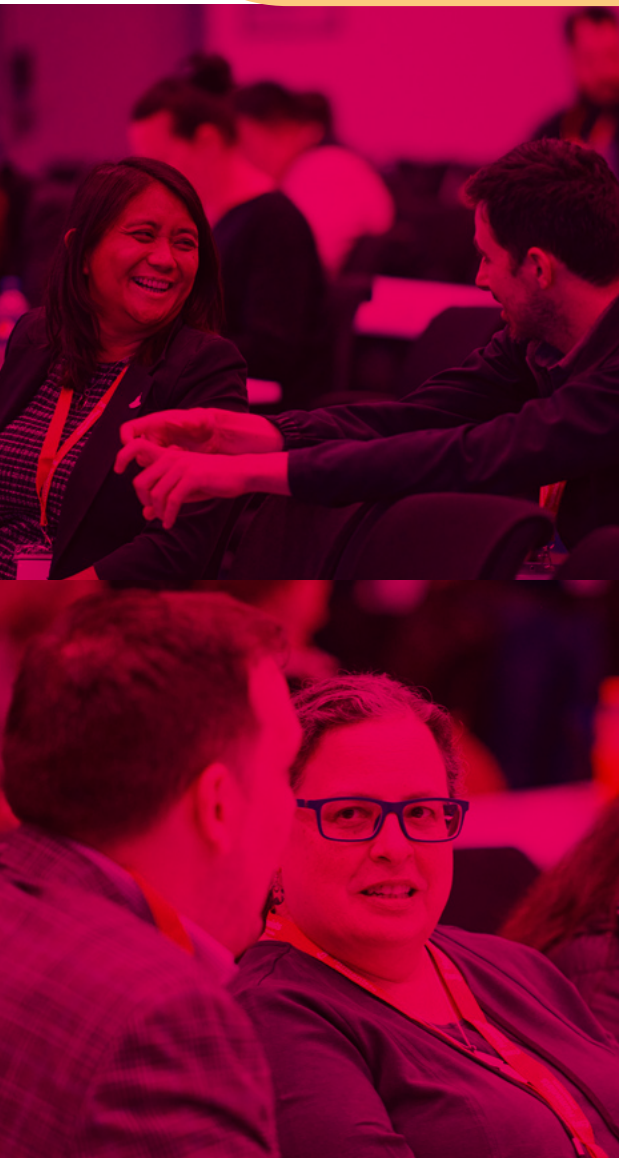


In the last quarter of 2023, we surveyed our Members and Associates. The following is a selection of the feedback we received from them:

“

*Humanist International membership has helped us to grow our network across the world. At first, we felt isolated as Humanists from a developing and highly religious country. Now we feel connected and that has strengthened our resolve and courage.”*

**Wonderful Mkhutche,  
Humanists Malawi**



*“The work of Humanists International is vital in helping to create a kinder, gentler and better world for existing and future generations world-wide.”*

**John Dowdle, Watford Area Humanists**

*“The right for people to choose what they want and what to think is very important to me and it is clear that those rights are increasingly infringed upon in society, the work of Humanist International in building a union bond between likeminded organizations globally gives us strength and a voice at numerous platforms to defend and represent the voiceless.”*

**Clement Kaukuetu,  
Free Thought Association of Namibia**

# 2

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

“

*I don't know how to thank you. I am persecuted in my own country, but there are people on the other side of the world who help me.*

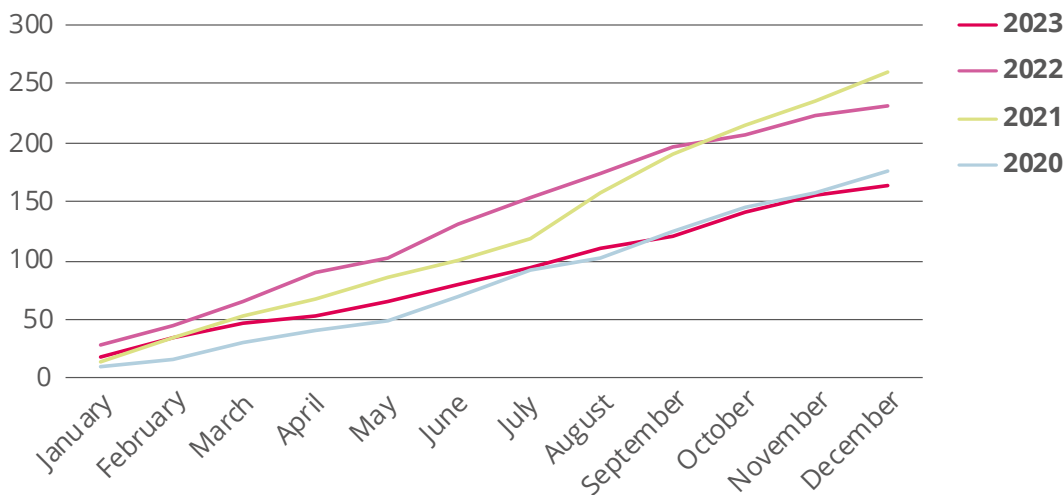
*This feeling is very strange and beautiful”*

**Recipient of support in 2023**

Demand for support is always high and 2023 was no different. Over the course of the year, 145 people contacted Humanists International for assistance; 96 of whom had never reached out to us before. Several people came back to us for additional help throughout the year, therefore we received a total of 163 requests for support.

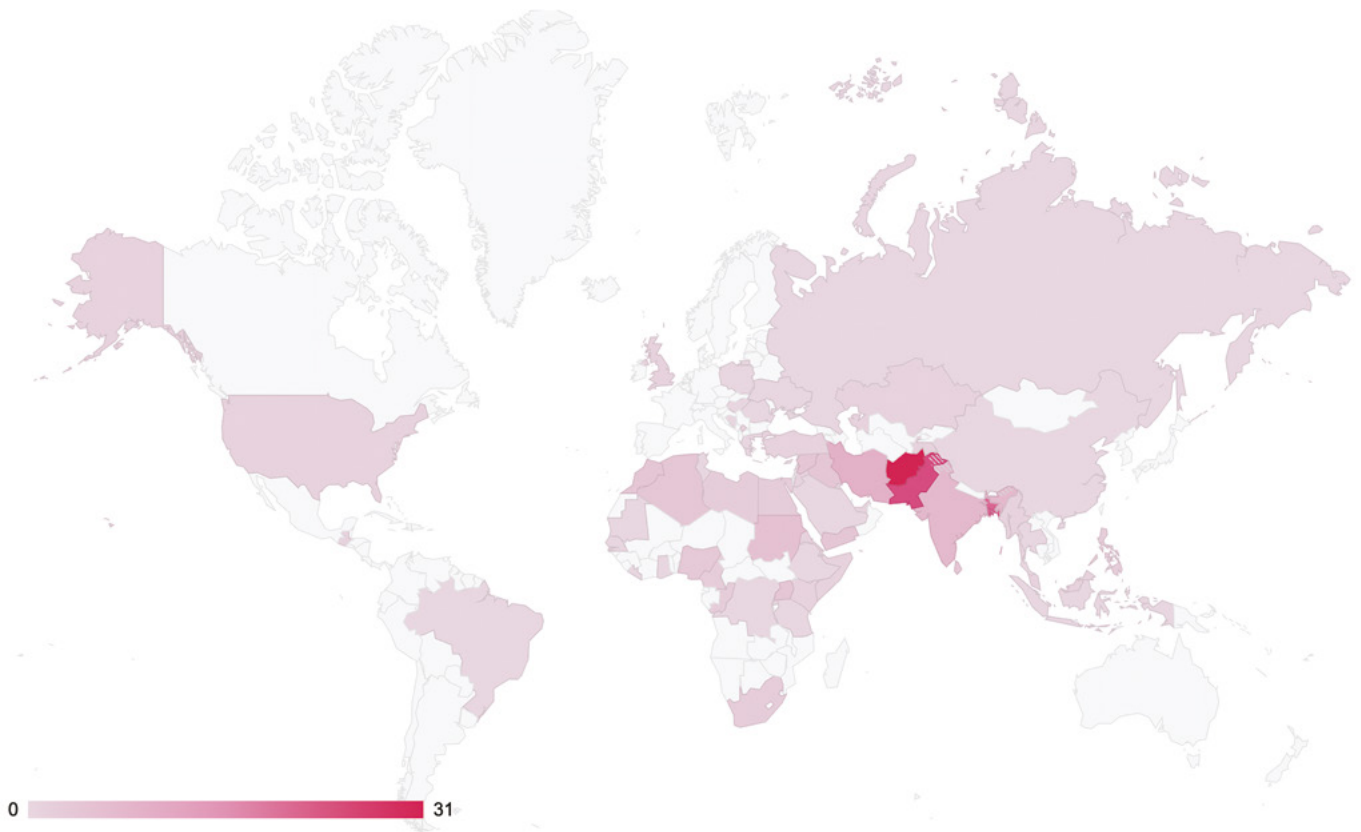
2023 saw the number of requests return to pre-August 2021 levels – when the Taliban took over Afghanistan doubling the average number of requests we received each month – for the first time. While the number of requests may have dropped, the volume of requests still significantly outpaces our capacity to verify and prioritize them officially. This highlights the ongoing need for increased resources to support humanists at risk.

### Comparison of the number of cases we are receiving year on year



Despite the return to previous levels of requests for support, the demographics of those seeking assistance has not reverted. Requests from Afghanistan continue to account for the largest percentage of all requests for help that we receive. Combining this with a consistently high demand from humanists and atheists in Pakistan, requests from Asia now account for more than half of those we receive globally.





“

*Your kindness and support played a monumental role in my life. Today I find myself in [a safe country] pursuing my master's degree – a dream that seemed impossible back then. I cannot express in mere words how profoundly grateful I am for your assistance. Your belief in me illuminated my path and allowed me to overcome challenges I once deemed insurmountable.”*

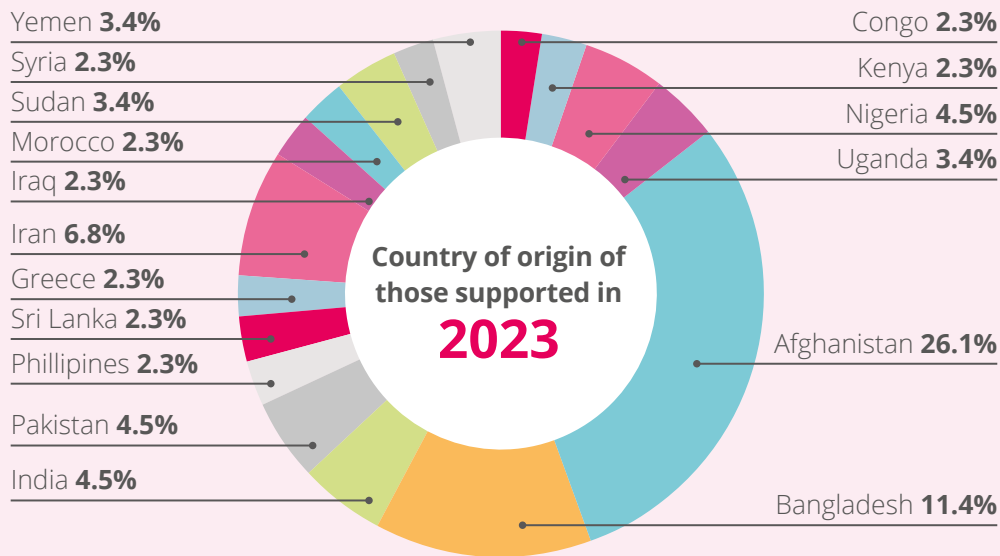
**Recipient of support in 2023**

In light of this, it is perhaps unsurprising that the vast majority of those who sought our help were seeking either relocation, financial or asylum support – many of them seeking a combination of the three. This kind of support is what we term ‘in-depth support’ owing to the more exhaustive verification needs and the likelihood that cases will need sustained support over a longer period of time.

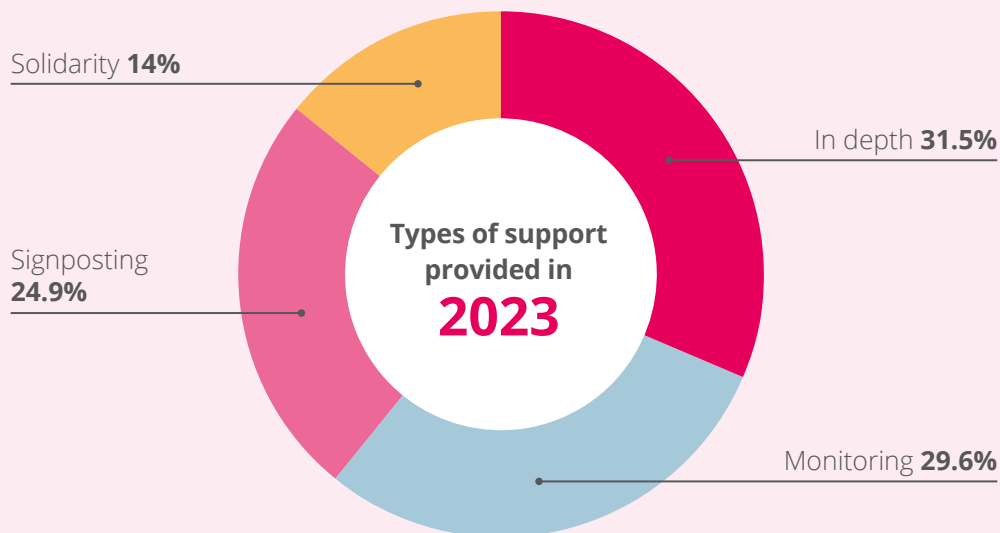
Although we were not able to provide tailored support to every applicant, everyone who reaches out to us is provided with an array of information to cater to their differing needs. This includes signposting to resources to support their security and wellbeing, relocation programmes, advice on what is needed to make an asylum claim, and organizations and other networks who may be able to help them.

With only one caseworker on staff, we must be selective in the cases we take up, prioritizing those at highest risk and whom we believe we are best positioned to help. For this reason, all applications are assessed against a set of standard criteria.

In 2023, we were able to provide tailored support to 88 people (52%) – representing a slight drop from 54% the previous year, in part due to the growing complexity of a small number of cases, requiring more intensive support efforts over a sustained period of time.



Of the 88 people who received tailored support, 32 people received in-depth support, including emergency grants, letters of support for asylum claims, campaigning initiatives, the identification of *pro bono* legal assistance, advocacy with international institutions, and private diplomacy with representatives of State governments.



This support included, but was not limited to:

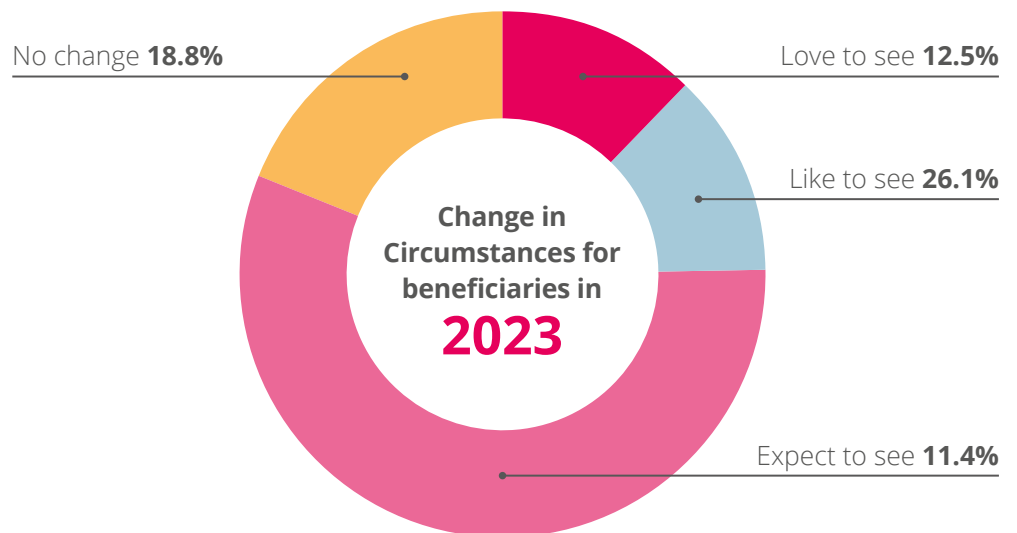
- **1 submission to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention**
- **7 Oral Statements delivered at the UN**
- **15 public statements**
- **14 letters of support**
- **2 public campaign calls to action**
- **5 briefings issued to relevant government officials**
- **21 financial grants secured.**

As part of our work to maximize the resources available to non-religious people at risk, we continued to facilitate their access to funds from partner organizations. Over the course of the year, we made

7 successful applications. As a result, we secured \$10,128 representing approximately 74% of the amount originally sought. This represents a reduction in the amount secured from the previous year, where we made 13 applications, 11 of which were successful or partially successful thereby securing \$47,755 (91% of the amount sought). The disparity in the amounts both sought and obtained from funding agents is a reflection both of the differing needs of the individuals whom we support, and stresses on the funding landscape for all charities. We'll continue to strengthen these partnerships to maximize resources for humanists in need.

At the end of each year, we assess the impact of the in-depth support provided by asking people to reflect on any changes in their circumstances, be they positive or negative.





In 2023, 26 (81%) of our ‘in-depth’ support recipients reported improvements in their circumstances that could be attributed at least in part to the assistance that we provided. For 18 of those people, the improvement was in line with what we expected – typically these were individuals whose immediate needs were met, such as they were able to pay their medical bills with the funds provided, but where they would likely need further help in future unless their circumstances changed significantly. These people often only received one-off support. Four people reported significant improvements – these typically related to court cases where their convictions were overturned, or where an asylum claim was successful. These individuals often received help or were monitored closely over the course of the year. An additional four people saw substantive improvements in their circumstances. Six people reported no change – this is due to the complex and intractable nature of their circumstances. Several of these individuals are seeking relocation or asylum abroad, and are currently awaiting the determination of their cases. We continue to monitor their cases in the meantime. Crucially, no one reported that their circumstances had deteriorated as a result of our intervention, which is testament to the safeguarding policies and procedures that we have in place to ensure that we do no harm.

*“Humanists International went beyond moral support; they penned support letters advocating for my safety and asylum applications. [...] Their unwavering support played a crucial role in securing a scholarship for me. Upon relocating to [a safe country], Humanists International continued to be a pillar of support. They introduced me to groups and individuals in the country, facilitating the expansion of my network and the forging of new friendships. In essence, Humanists International played a pivotal role in guiding and supporting me during a critical juncture in my life.[...] Their support has been a transformative force, significantly altering my circumstances for the better.”*



In 2023, we committed to working to empower our Members and Associates to better assist humanists at risk. We provided data, research, and case studies to 77 representatives of Member and Associates (compared to just 21 in 2021), equipping them to lobby their governments and institutions for humanist rights advocacy. This approach aims to build long-term capacity within our network.

We continued to engage with other NGOs to support humanists at risk over the course of 2023, meeting with 13 NGOs to raise awareness as well as participating in the annual general meeting of the EU Temporary Relocation Platform, where we are able to highlight the persecution faced by the non-religious with the 40+ organizations in attendance who are focused on supporting human rights defenders.

Humanists International's 2023 *Freedom of Thought Report* was successfully launched on 14 December 2023. The global launch event, held in Washington, D.C., USA, was organized by our Member, the American Humanist Association, and enjoyed high attendance. In addition to this central event, two other Member organizations hosted national launch events, further amplifying the Report's reach. The report itself benefited from significant updates throughout 2023, with 34 country entries revised according to the five-year rolling cycle of updates. This demonstrates our ongoing commitment to providing the most current information on the global landscape of freedom of thought.

By the end of December, the Report had been downloaded more than 800 times representing the highest number of downloads at launch compared to any previous year. As with previous years, we anticipate that the Report will continue to be accessed and downloaded throughout the year to come. Humanists International's research is increasingly being cited by institutions and governments alike.

Our efforts to secure consortium funding for the End Blasphemy Laws campaign are currently on hold. While we weren't able to finalize a proposal in 2023, representatives of Humanists International initiated conversations regarding possible future partnership with several international NGOs who share our commitment to the repeal of 'blasphemy' laws. We plan to revisit this initiative in the future.

We are immensely grateful to everyone who supported our fundraising efforts in 2023 to help make this work possible. We would also like to say a special thank you to the following organizations:

- **Alliance of Humanists, Atheists and Agnostics**
- **Association of Black Humanists**
- **Central London Humanists**
- **Czech Humanists**
- **Evan Cornish Foundation**
- **Freedom From Religion Foundation**
- **Humanists Barbados**
- **Humanists Iceland**
- **Universalist Unitarian Church of Halifax**





### 3

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

Humanists International 2020 continued to prioritize advocacy work at key institutions within the United Nations system.

Humanists International significantly amplified its voice at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva in 2023. We delivered 30 statements, a considerable increase from the 16 statements made in 2022. For a full review of these statements, please visit our website: <https://humanists.international/what-we-do/advocacy/advocacy-statement/>.

2023 saw a surge in our in-person advocacy efforts. Our dedicated team built relationships with over 56 new UN personnel, allowing us to brief 16 senior officials and key stakeholders on critical issues. This groundwork helped influence the development of 12 UN resolutions, maintaining our impact from the previous year. We also strengthened collaboration with other NGOs through 16 joint actions, including letters, lobbying efforts, events, and various advocacy activities.

While prioritizing UN advocacy, Humanists International remains committed to empowering our network. In 2023, we trained 23 representatives from 7 member organizations, equipping them

with advocacy skills for their local and regional contexts. The training's success is evident in the high Net Promoter Score (+50, exceeding industry standards) and the fact that 3 participants planned to implement post-training advocacy action plans.

Humanists International saw a rise in member-driven UN advocacy in 2023. We supported 18 member organizations (up from 15 in 2022) in their efforts to engage with the Universal Periodic Review, Human Rights Council, and other Treaty Bodies. While the number of briefing documents offered to members decreased slightly (3 in 2023 vs. 5 in 2022), member-focused advocacy communication remained strong with 44 pieces produced throughout the year (compared to 42 in 2022).

Throughout 2023 the new European Advocacy Officer established a member-led European Advocacy Forum which meets quarterly with leaders from the participating European organizations. This Forum has received very positive feedback, and work is underway to secure ongoing funding for this position through an additional fee from European member organizations.

# 4

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



Throughout the year the forecast fiscal cash deficit of the organization has increased slightly from 4% to 8%, but remained within acceptable levels due to improved financial control mechanisms. (The organization anticipated to receive \$407k legacy in late 2023 and it was reflected in the financial statement. However, it had no effect on the cash flow forecast during the year.)

As economic conditions were brighter outlook compared to 2022, the Board revisited its previous decision on cost-of-living adjustments. One member of staff did leave in Q2, which is likely to have been related to the lack of cost of living increase. Following a recommendation from the CEO in Q3, the Board approved a 5% salary increase for all staff.

Our 2023 staff satisfaction survey revealed a positive impact from the flexible working arrangements. A significant increase was seen in the scores, with 90% of respondents reporting positive experiences compared to 76% in 2022. Absenteeism rates also improved in 2023, with a maximum of 14% in the final quarter, down from 16% in the same period of 2022 (likely due to seasonal illness). This suggests that flexible working arrangements have contributed to a healthier and more resilient workforce.

Our email audience grew in 2023, with 1,588 new subscribers joining our newsletter list compared to 1,276 in 2022. Retention rates for our regular donors remained steady throughout 2023, averaging around 50%. This loyalty is a testament to the ongoing support of our dedicated community.





# Future plans

The personnel team and Board members met together online in October 2023 to review the strategy and operational progress made towards their achievement.

In addition to this, the CEO has set the following goals for the staff team:

1. Members at the heart of everything we do
2. Partnerships with like-minded organizations
3. Strengthen governance and risk management

The following is a summary of key future plans listed under each of the relevant strategic aims:

## 1 Successful and sustainable humanist organizations exist in every part of the world and are networked together

Our vital Growth & Development grant program faces a funding gap as existing restricted donations are nearing depletion. To ensure its future, securing a new funding source is a top priority.

We're committed to empowering our members and supporters. We'll develop a comprehensive program of online training and seminars based on their needs and preferences, identified through surveys and engagement initiatives. This investment aims to strengthen their capacity to advance humanism in their communities.

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

We're actively shaping a new advocacy work plan for Europe. This plan will be developed in collaboration with our Members and Associates through our newly established European Policy Forum. This forum will be a platform for engagement and will empower our network to champion humanist values across the continent.

We remain dedicated to supporting our members in regional and international advocacy efforts. We'll continue to develop innovative ways to foster engagement and equip them with the resources they need to make their voices heard on critical issues.

## 3 Humanists are no longer at risk for their beliefs or identity

By the end of 2024 we will present a 3 year strategy for protecting humanists at risk to the Board. This strategy will reassess how best to utilize our resources in the most impactful way.

We will try to engage more of our Members and Associates in helping to contribute to the Freedom of Thought Report in 2024. To do this we will run a series of drop-in training events and seminars.

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

We will work in consultation with our Members and Associates to reinvigorate the General Assembly to ensure that it better engages our members.

In preparation for the election of a new President in 2025, work will be undertaken to create a new strategic-level risk register, a codified set of financial regulations, and new governance handbook to ensure that the organization is well placed for the leadership changes ahead.

# Our members and associates

At the end of 2023, Humanists International's ratified membership was:

**Members: 64**

**Associates: 63**

## New members in 2023:

Stockport Humanists

Chanan Development Association

Czech Humanists

Humanist Association of Toronto

Ruhiira Humanist Initiative For Community Development

Accra Atheists

Secular Coalition for America

## # Members & associates by global region

**Africa: 23**

**Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Islands: 4**

**Central Asia: 0**

**Europe: 57**

**Latin America and the Caribbean: 11**

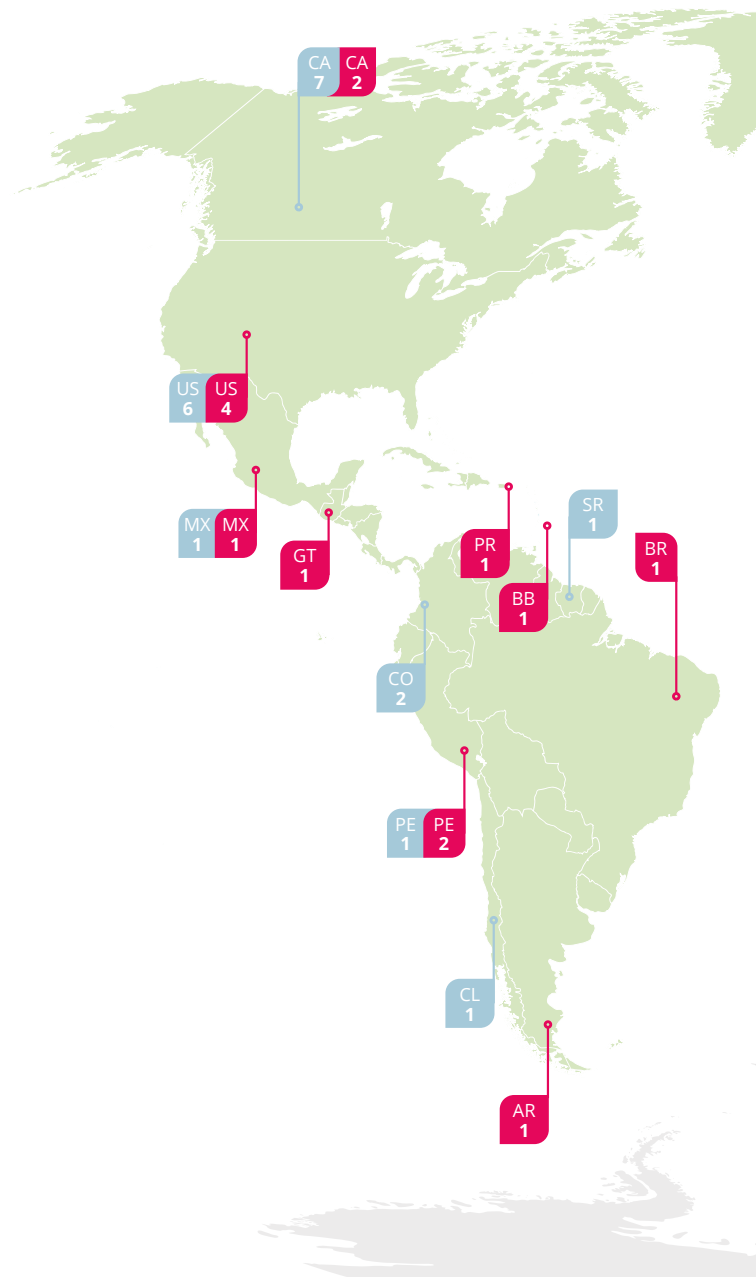
**Middle East & North Africa: 2**

**South-East Asia: 4**

**South Asia: 7**

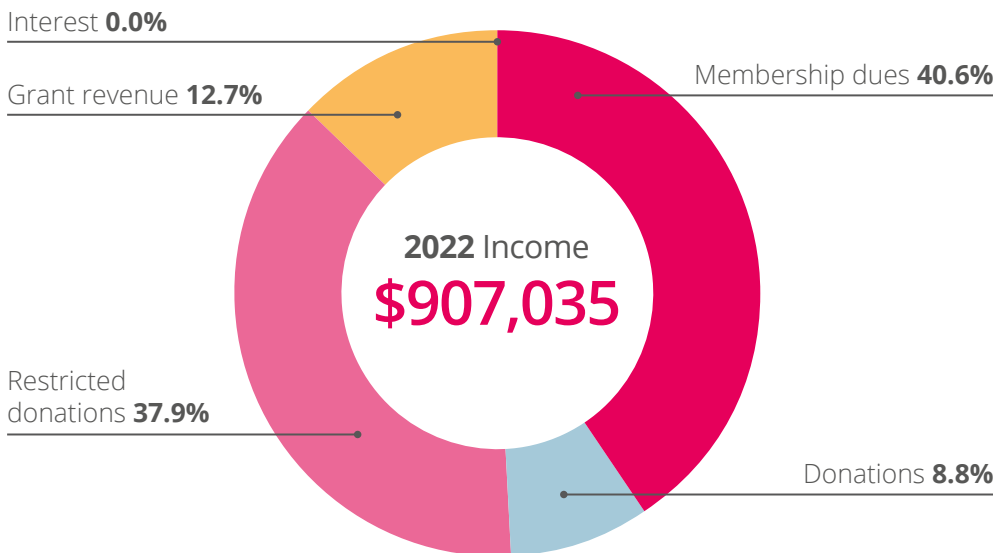
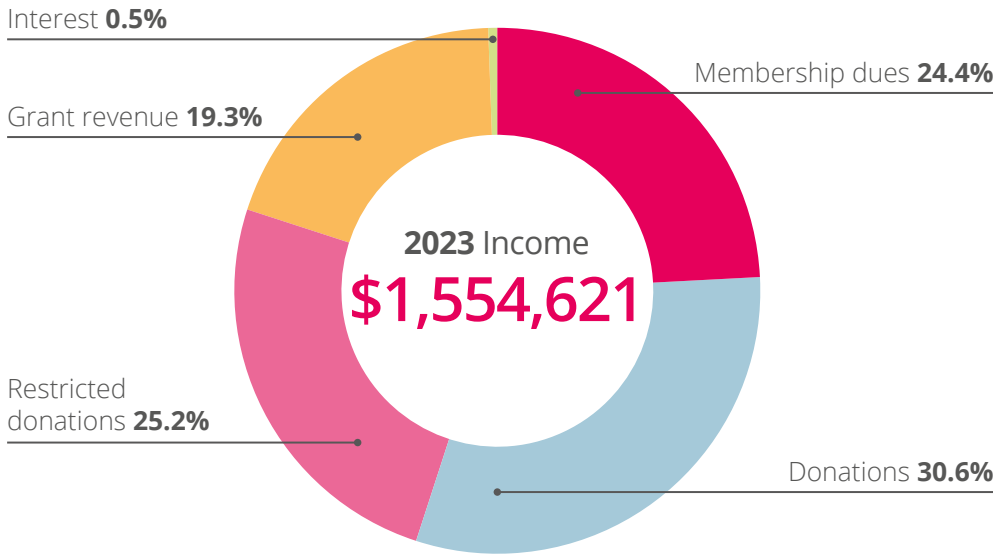
**US & Canada: 19**

**Total # Member & Associates: 127**





# Finances



In 2023, the global economy demonstrated strong growth and resilience, with many regions achieving remarkable progress despite ongoing challenges. With this, at the end of 2023, we saw a 494%, 14% and 3% increase in General Donations, Restricted Donations, and Membership Income respectively compared to 2022. There have been three noticeable incomes: 1) General Donations \$476k, 2) Restricted Donations \$391k, and 3) Grant Revenue \$300k.

At the end of 2023, the investment market value grew by a notable 20% compared to the beginning of the year, driven by improved market conditions. Humanists International's investment fund, which was underwater by \$227k at the end of 2022, rebounded during 2023, surpassing the original \$2.6m value of donor-restricted gifts.

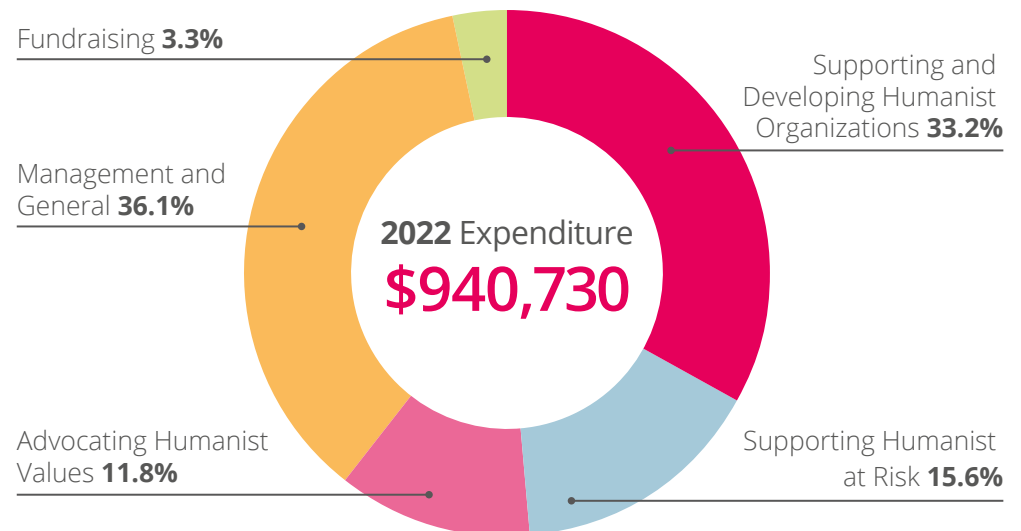
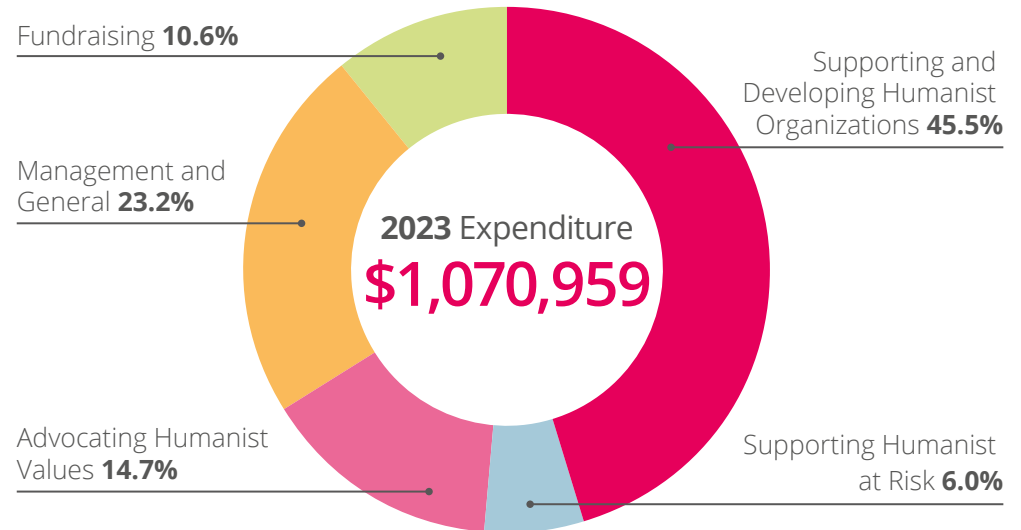
The total income for the reporting period reached \$1.55m, representing a significant 71% increase compared to the previous year. This can be attributed to enhanced engagement with member organizations and donors and diversified revenue streams, for example, conducting various projects. These financial contributions received also further supplement the organization's resources, supporting specific projects and campaigns aligned with the organisational objectives. It is important to note that \$407k of the total income was accrued legacy income – the organization anticipated the legacy towards the end of 2023 and received it at the end of February 2024. This inclusion aligns with accounting regulations and provides a more accurate depiction of our financial position and performance for the entirety of 2023.



Despite concerted efforts, Humanists International faced challenges in meeting fundraising targets, with only 53% of budgeted income achieved for 2023. While securing grants from trusts and foundations remained challenging, the organization remains optimistic about increasing this income stream. The successful receipt of two grants in the inaugural year of exploring trusts and foundations grants reflects the potential for growth. Next year, Humanists International plans to invest \$17k in digital marketing, lead generation and fundraising initiatives to increase donation income, brand awareness, engagement, and ultimately meet fundraising targets.

Furthermore, the organization remains committed to exploring new funding opportunities as a key focus of our fundraising efforts in 2024. By diversifying our revenue streams and engaging with potential donors, partners, and supporters, we seek to broaden our financial base and enhance our capacity to address pressing challenges and seize emerging opportunities.

At the end of 2023, Humanists International's financial position was much stronger than the prior year, with total assets of \$4.48m and liabilities of \$90k. (2022 year-end total assets: \$3.62m, liabilities: \$50k.)



## Summary of Expenditure on Activities (\$)

	Total 2023	Total 2022
Supporting and Developing Humanist Organizations	487,236	311,955
Supporting Humanists at Risk	64,204	146,509
Advocating Humanist Values	157,665	111,244
Management and General	248,037	339,759
Fundraising	113,817	31,264
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,070,959</b>	<b>\$940,731</b>

## Income and Expenditure

	Unrestricted	Restricted	Endowment	2023 (\$) Total	2022 (\$) Total
<b>Income</b>					
Membership dues	379,155	-	-	379,155	367,875
Donations	476,452	391,048	-	867,500	424,061
Grant revenue	299,963	-	-	299,963	115,066
Interest	8,003	-	-	8,003	33
<b>Total income</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$1,554,621</b>	<b>\$907,035</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Personnel	630,116	-	-	630,116	400,968
Professional fees	123,720	-	-	123,720	195,813
Office expenses	37,678	-	-	37,678	19,066
Conferences and meetings	29,922	-	-	29,922	18,964
Insurance	3,549	-	-	3,549	3,144
Occupancy	2,877	-	-	2,877	30,293
Information tec (& Advertising)	26,750	-	-	26,750	21,389
Travel	50,134	-	-	50,134	26,071
Miscellaneous	3,101	-	-	3,101	9,043
Grants and assistance	163,112	-	-	163,112	215,980
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$1,070,959</b>	<b>\$940,731</b>
Refund of Contributions	(39,420)	-	-	(39,420)	
Exchange (losses)	(91,263)	-	-	(91,263)	(253,998)
Net assets released	478,235	(478,235)	-	0	0
Net investment return	-	464,385	-	464,385	(560,419)
<b>Net Movement in Funds</b>	<b>440,166</b>	<b>377,198</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$817,364</b>	<b>\$(848,113)</b>
Balance at January 1, 2023	-	-	-	3,570,410	4,418,523
<b>Balance at December 31, 2023</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$4,387,774</b>	<b>\$3,570,410</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

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, G2 4JR, UK.

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