



HOSTAGE
INTERNATIONAL

IMPACT REPORT 2022-2023

hostageinternational.org

THANK YOU FROM OUR CHAIR & CEO

Last year was extraordinary and led to our responding to an unprecedented number of people affected by arbitrary detentions, as well as our providing continued support for those affected by kidnaps-for-ransom.

Over the past ten years we had helped on average around 35 people each year – half of whom were associated with new cases from that year and half from previous years - each one needing bespoke and often complex support. However, by the end of March 2023, we were supporting 75 individuals – 40 of whom had approached us in 2022 – on top of a further 35 people we were already assisting from previous years.

The need for ongoing support was brought into focus when in April 2022 we accompanied families and former hostages at the trial and sentencing, in the United States, of two Islamic State members involved in the kidnapping and murder of journalists and aid workers in Syria in 2012.

Our small staff team remain at the forefront of our work to realise our mission. Their expertise enables us to meet a range of needs including providing subject-matter expertise, supporting families in their dealings with home governments, delivering bespoke training to government personnel in family support, offering media guidance to families or to returning hostages, and ensuring access to the services of our specialist partners.

Our essential volunteer caseworkers support our mission by being a point of contact for a family member or former hostage or detainee, and offering consistent practical and emotional support throughout their ordeal and recovery.

Significant grants from the Sigrid Rausing Trust and UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, alongside the generosity of many individual and corporate donors, have enabled us to deliver our independent, niche, and complex support.

Sadly, we live in a world with conflicts and risk, but we hope that the increase in those contacting us is not only down to this increased risk, but also a result of our ongoing work to improve awareness of our cause and our services across the world. We need people to know that we are here for anyone affected by hostage-taking and arbitrary detention outside their home country.

Your help - in spreading awareness or signing your organisation up for our training, or in making a donation of any size - transforms the lives of those affected by the terrifying trauma of hostage-taking and arbitrary detention.

Thank you,



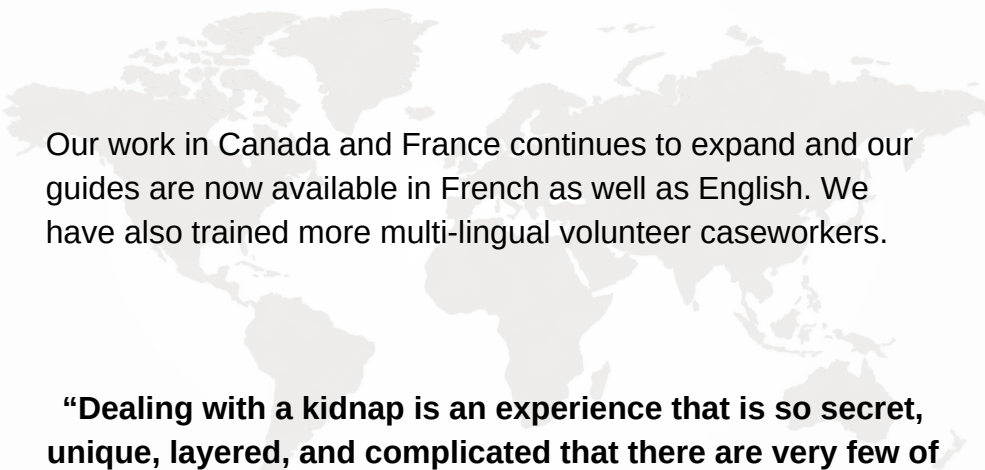
Lara Symons
CEO



Phil Bigley OBE
Chair

OUR INTERNATIONAL REACH

When Hostage UK rebranded as Hostage International in 2018, we wanted to reflect the scope of our international work, which continues to grow. This year we have provided support to people affected by hostage-taking in Australia, Bali, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, New Zealand, Republic of Ireland, Turkey, the UAE and the UK.



Our work in Canada and France continues to expand and our guides are now available in French as well as English. We have also trained more multi-lingual volunteer caseworkers.

“Dealing with a kidnap is an experience that is so secret, unique, layered, and complicated that there are very few of us equipped to provide support. Strengthening Hostage International’s outreach in Canada is vital to assist those going through this tragedy. Having companions in the journey means so much, not just in Canada but across the world.”

A beneficiary, whose brother was kidnapped and subsequently murdered.

In Australia we are increasing our network of volunteer caseworkers. One of our recently recruited caseworkers was inspired to volunteer for Hostage International after her brother was taken hostage and her family helped by the charity:

“There is nothing so surreal or devastating as having a loved one go missing in such awful circumstances. Even more confusing and confronting is when the loved one returns – finally safe but forever changed.

The team at Hostage International were there for me and our family in a way that no other organisation could be.

Not only did they provide very real practical support – but did so with total compassion and empathy. There are no words to fully express how grateful I am.”

75

individuals supported by Hostage International this year

40

new individuals supported

26

people in 8 countries received professional mental health support facilitated by Hostage International

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

This year, we have responded to an unprecedented need for specialist counselling services. As such, we forged a partnership with Trauma Treatment International (TTI) to ensure that former hostages could receive more timely trauma support.

On top of this partnership, we continue to grow our network of mental health experts around the world – including in Australia, Canada and the UK - to deliver bespoke psychological treatment to families as well as former hostages.

Our network of experts have helped at least 26 people access mental health treatment this financial year, alongside Hostage International staff and volunteers continuing to provide essential emotional support and assisting individuals with practical and administrative tasks.

TTI's trauma clinic lead Dr Sarah Whittaker explained how this holistic approach is likely to have a hugely beneficial effect:

“In therapy, we encourage clients to try and make sense of the past, but it’s hard for them to do this when their day-to-day life is in chaos. Our clients from Hostage International will recover much more quickly when their current stressors are being resolved at the same time – especially if those stressors were caused by the hostage situation in the first place.”

PRACTICAL & EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

We work flexibly to meet the individual needs of those affected by hostage-taking. We offer holistic psychosocial support - the practical and emotional support not delivered by mental health experts - for as long as is needed.

We often talk about how we help people with 'life admin', as these daily stressors often become too much for many people who have experienced the trauma of a kidnap or arbitrary detention.

Our support is incredibly wide-ranging and includes simply listening through to offering immediate and on-going media guidance, ensuring access to trauma therapy, and timely physical medical support for former hostages (such as access to check-ups or dentistry), helping former hostages navigate complex housing issues or accessing benefits, and where necessary offering access to our pro-bono legal services.

"I do not know how to say thank you for making me feel like a human being again."

A former hostage, kidnapped and assaulted in 2022, who was left destitute after release with severe PTSD. She had lost everything to pay a ransom. We supported her to navigate the health, housing and benefits systems while being there to listen.

EDUCATION AROUND FAMILY & HOSTAGE SUPPORT

As well as forming part of our mission, our education programme remains a key revenue stream – enabling us to spread awareness about family and hostage support while securing essential funds to help us deliver our core services.

This year we have delivered around 70 hours of bespoke training and awareness sessions for organisations, government departments and NGOs. We have provided these remotely or in-person for clients in countries including Australia, Canada, Denmark, Norway and the UK.

Courses are tailored to each organisation around best practice in family support and hostage reintegration – and we have recently adapted our materials to respond to the increase in arbitrary detentions.

“Really excellent – both in presentation (really engaging) and material (in bite-sized, easy-to-digest, chunks).”

“Very good tone and delivery encouraging a supporting and caring atmosphere.”

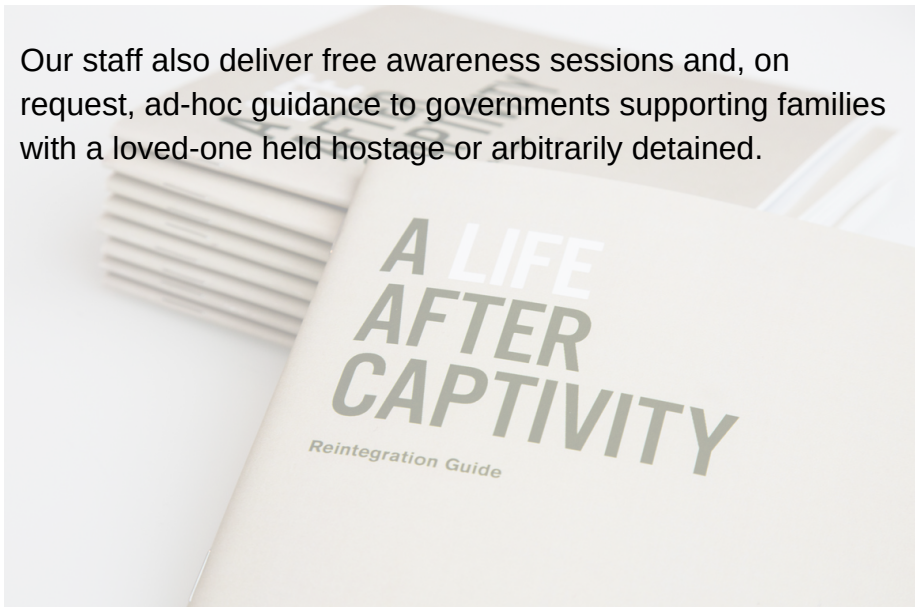
**Find out more about our training packages:
info@hostageinternational.org**

DISCREET ADVOCACY

Another key element of our mission that we have built on this year is around how we can best work, discreetly, to encourage governments and employers to adopt policies and practices to better support families and former hostages and which consider the perspectives and feedback from those affected.

January 2023 saw the culmination of the findings of the UK Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee inquiry into the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office's approach to arbitrary detentions in state-to-state relations. As an organisation working with those affected by arbitrary detentions, we not only submitted written evidence, but two staff members were at the findings session to offer independent emotional support to those attending.

Our staff also deliver free awareness sessions and, on request, ad-hoc guidance to governments supporting families with a loved-one held hostage or arbitrarily detained.



FUNDRAISING

Throughout 2022-23, we raised nearly £200,000 for our work across the world, with individuals alone donating nearly £40,000 to help us support people through the most unimaginably traumatic times.

Anoosheh's story

Just over six months after release from being arbitrarily detained in Iran, Anoosheh embarked on his first London Marathon helping to highlight the work of Hostage International and raising more than £6,000 in the process.



“Running helped keep me fit in body and mind back then, and it continues to help me now as I find meaning in the suffering that I, and my family, have been through.

“It was obviously a horrific time for all of us, but the problems for hostage families don’t disappear after release, which is why I’m running this London Marathon for Hostage International – who are always ready to support affected families.”

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Your help can transform the lives of those affected by the niche and terrifying crime of a kidnap or arbitrary detention – whether a family living through the crisis of having a loved one taken or a former hostage trying to reintegrate to life.

Make a donation

Even a small amount can help. A monthly donation is one of the most effective ways to give. Please visit www.hostageinternational.org to make a meaningful difference.

Fundraise for us

Whether you're up for fitness challenges, baking - or eating - cakes, donations instead of a birthday present, or organising a fundraiser of your own; all can make a big difference. Contact info@hostageinternational.org if you'd like to organise a fundraising event or activity and we can help.

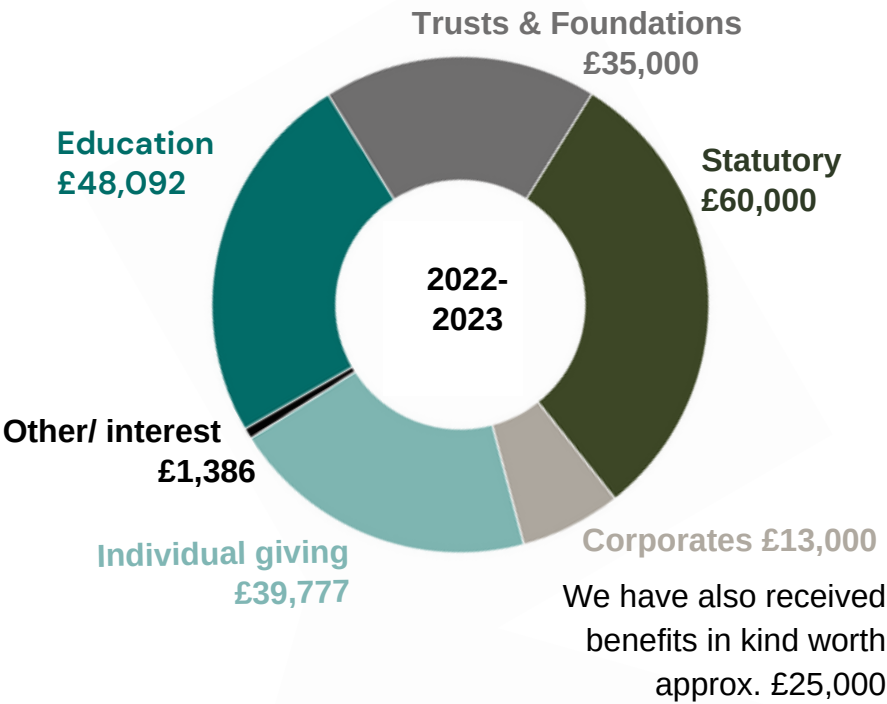
Work with us

We are always looking for bilingual volunteers with experience and knowledge of kidnaps or mental health trauma. If you have the skills and would like to hear more, please email info@hostageinternational.org

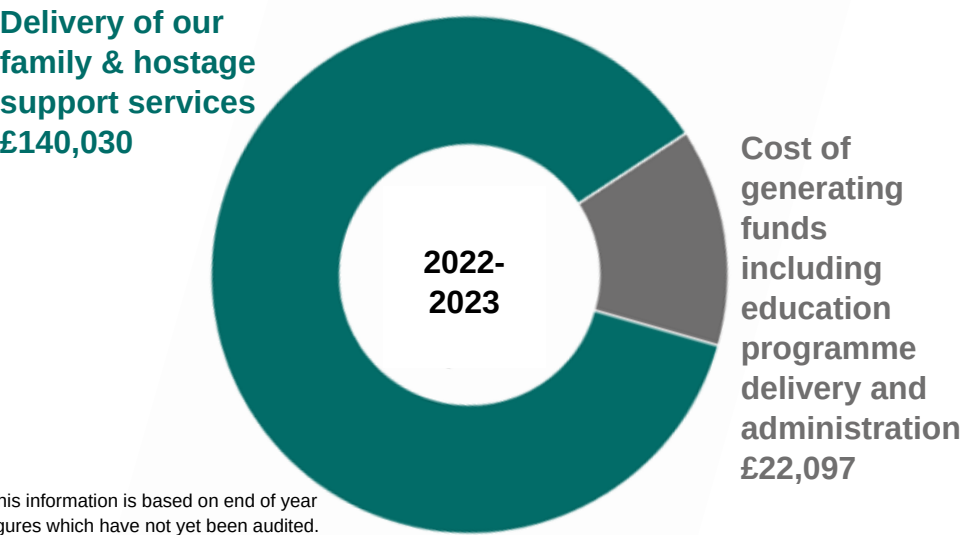
Spread awareness

Let others know about Hostage International. Follow us & share our stories on social media .

INCOME



EXPENDITURE



THANK YOU

Our generous partners and donors help transform people's lives. We'd particularly like to thank:

THE
SIGRID
RAUSING
TRUST



Outcider°

TRAUMA
TREATMENT
INTERNATIONAL

Morgan Lewis

Hogan
Lovells




Our team of mental health advisers.

We'd also like to say a particular thank you to our president, Sir Terry Waite KCMG CBE, our vice-president, Carlo Laurenzi OBE, our newly appointed patrons John McCarthy CBE and Judith Tebbutt, and all our volunteers for their continued support.

To support us:

info@hostageinternational.org

www.hostageinternational.org

An illustration on the left side of the page shows a man, a woman, and a young boy. The man is on the left, wearing a light green shirt, and is embracing the woman and the boy. The woman is in the center, wearing a teal top, and is also embracing the boy. The boy is on the right, wearing a dark green sweater and light-colored pants, and is looking towards the viewer with a slight smile. The background is a dark, muted green.

“Hostage International was the only organisation that connected to our situation on a deeply personal level, which is embedded at the charity’s core DNA through Terry Waite.

"The charity gave us every resource it had available, regardless of the nature of help we required, including PTSD therapy and many other personal life management aids that fell beyond the capacity of most other charities."

Aryan, whose father Anoosheh Ashoori was arbitrarily detained in Iran for nearly five years until his release in March 2022.

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