

Annual Report 2024





President's Foreword



Florian Irminger
President

We dedicate this annual report to our esteemed colleague, human rights defender Anar Mammadli. He was arrested in Baku on 29 April 2024. Despite his health rapidly deteriorating in detention, he has been awaiting trial since, which is scheduled to commence on 26 May 2025.

Anar Mammadli and his Azerbaijani colleagues recognised the potential of Progress & Change Action Lab when we were founded. They sought our support to establish the Climate of Justice Initiative before the 29th United Nations Climate Change Conference, held in Baku in November 2024. After Anar Mammadli's arrest, we redirected our efforts to launching, coordinating, and representing the Campaign to End Repression in Azerbaijan on behalf of a Steering Committee of Azerbaijani lawyers and human rights defenders.

Personally, I have been fortunate to support and engage with Azerbaijani friends and colleagues I have known for nearly two decades. These human rights defenders, lawyers, and activists continuously inspire me.

I am further filled with pride in the accomplishments we have achieved through our year-long engagement with the DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to DCAF for their trust in our work.

The year concluded with Donald J. Trump's election to the White House. 2025 commenced with us realising the situation is deteriorating even further than we had anticipated. We are witnessing an organised assault on human rights and civic space, manifesting in the cancellation of foreign funding, policies that exacerbate the climate crisis and environmental emergency, and the promotion of illiberal, nationalist, and populist ideologies. These actions are compounded by an assault on multilateral cooperation and the undermining of international accountability and justice mechanisms.

We immediately acted through two initiatives, which we launched early in 2025, and new partnerships.

Let us remain engaged — thank you for your trust and your friendship!

Our Board



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Special Thanks

Special thanks to our partners who trusted us over this year, in particular: Azerbaijani colleagues linked to the Campaign to End Repression in Azerbaijan and partners at DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance. We also warmly thank you donors — they trusted us as we start our work and accepted to finance projects hosted and powered by P&C Action Lab.

We would also like to express special thanks to friends of P&C Action Lab, who have worked with us on delivering our services throughout the year, especially our International Human Rights Law Advisor Alexandra Swetzer, our International Campaigns & Communications Advisor Clément Piguet, designer Rea Zhushi, and editor Mary Lambeth.

“

On behalf of DCAF, I would like to thank you again for guiding us in throughout the long process of developing DCAF's 2025-2030 strategy. Your leadership and guidance served as our north star throughout this process, and we remain grateful for your role as DCAF's "critical friend" during this period of change. It has helped us situate ourselves in, and prepare for, our rapidly changing context and I am confident that this document will be able to help us navigate the challenges that lie in the road ahead of us. The strategy is now available online and which will guide our work in the next six years.

”

Ambassador Nathalie Chuard

Director, DCAF - Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance



How We Work

Partnerships are at the heart of everything we do.

We believe meaningful change happens through partnership, and we are committed to ensuring that our contributions drive tangible progress.

Our role is to enhance, empower, elevate the work of those we collaborate with. To do so, we see ourselves as advisors and co-creators, our partners & us, together.

Strategy Development: Transforming Inertia into Action

In today's volatile world, a compelling strategy is not only about what our partners want to achieve, but also about the reforms needed to get there.

We pride ourselves on tailoring our strategy development services to the specific needs of our partners. Whether they need help separating long-term goals from day-to-day urgencies, uncovering unseen potential or addressing unknown strategy gaps, we can help by asking the right questions and identifying how our partners and their team can adapt to ensure their strategy meets today's challenges and continues to make a difference.

We work with our partners and their stakeholders throughout the process to design and implement (transition) strategies that work for them.

Outreach: Amplifying Influence

Effective outreach is about connecting with the audience.

We work with our partners and their team to design multi-faceted outreach and advocacy campaigns that amplify their influence, increase their visibility and optimise their campaign results at all levels — regional, national and international.

We develop carefully tailored campaign plans that our partners can see yourself in.

We manage their campaigns on our partners behalf, with their guidance and oversight

Opportunity Identification: Seeing Potential Amidst Challenges

Unpredictability has become today's "new normal", which can hinder our ability to see tomorrow's potential.

Our Opportunity Identification services can provide our partners and their team with an additional perspective by examining what you and your team may be overlooking when immersed in day-to-day operations.

“Facing Populism: Harnessing Opportunities, Not Despair”

Originally published on LinkedIn, 6 November 2024

An erosion of human rights and the accelerating pace of the climate crisis and the environmental emergency on a daily basis: these challenges exacerbate and reinforce each other, compounded by a diminishing spirit of multilateral cooperation, the weakening of security governance, and the discrediting of international accountability and justice mechanisms, which populists and autocrats seek to achieve in concert.

The resurgence of illiberal, nationalist, and populist ideologies is the very reason behind the establishment of Progress & Change Action Lab over 18 months ago; we provide support to non-profits and governmental institutions as they navigate the multifaceted challenges of the present era.

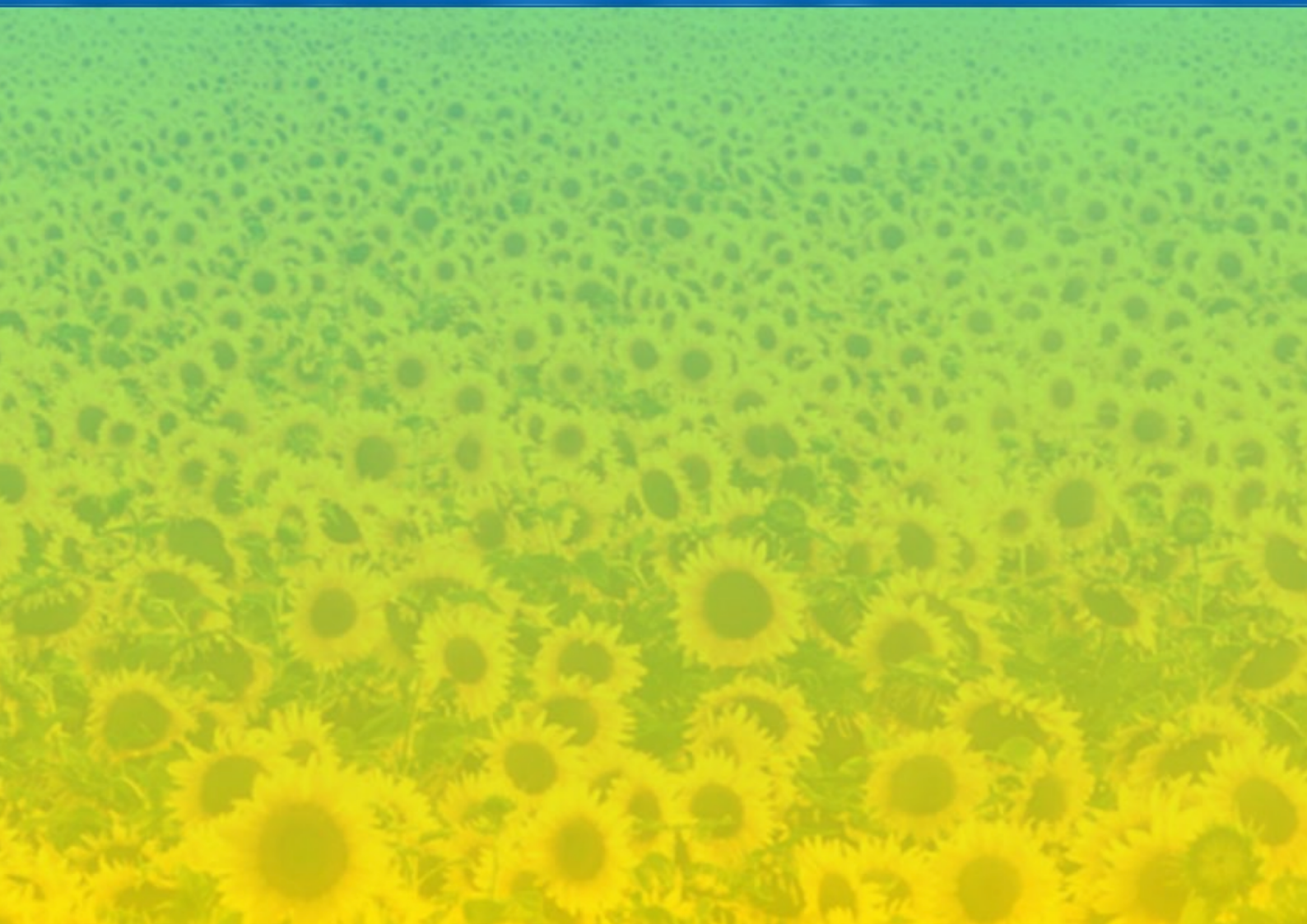
Through our work, we aim to contribute to reinforcing non-profits at a time that may be more challenging than ever. The re-election of President-elect Trump serves as a reminder of the validity of our foundations and the necessity for all of us to acknowledge that we do not possess all the answers and must collaborate to find the most effective paths forward.

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/facing-populism-harnessing-opportunities-despair-mmmgf/?trackingId=UVfCCjQ1m6H2RcbFWJbGXg%3D%3D>

Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping, Kim Jong Un of the People's Republic of Korea and Isaias Afwerki of Eritrea, as well as Nicolás Maduro of Venezuela and Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan, amongst many others, look with delight at Donald Trump's return to the White House. Yesterday's presidential election serves as a stark illustration of the global populist surge, which has been endorsed and encouraged by these autocrats.



We cannot remain idle when we believe our contribution could make a positive impact.



Our Projects in 2024

UNSR on Freedom of Association and Assembly: Civil Society is Crucial in the Selection Process

Started in September 2023, P&C Action Lab was instrumental in initiating an informal coalition of NGOs working together on the appointment of the new United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of association and peaceful assembly. The coalition was coordinated by the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) and comprised of widely known and respected global and regional human rights organisations. The coalition aimed to ensure civil society input played a role in the UNSR nomination and selection process.

P&C Action Lab, represented by its President, Florian Irminger, supported ICNL's coordinator with policy advice and process insights.

The process culminated in the appointment of Gina Romero as special rapporteur in April 2024, to the great satisfaction of all NGOs involved in the process.

DCAF: Partnership to Strengthen Peace and Security with a Human Rights Based Approach

Through an engagement started in September 2023, Progress & Change Action Lab, represented by its President, Florian Irminger, has worked with the leadership of DCAF - Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance to develop its new strategic framework for the period 2025-2029.

The partnership involved us working closely with the steering of DCAF's strategy development process, providing guidance and assistance on a thorough internal consultation process and leading the drafting of an initial draft strategy, in addition to providing expert policy advice and external organisational on insight.

P&C Action Lab's involvement with DCAF for the strategy development ended in May 2024.



Progress & Change Action Lab

488 followers

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We are delighted to see the 2025-2030 strategy of **DCAF - Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance**:

💡 Through our engagement with DCAF, we have discovered an organisation full of knowledge, competence and goodwill. We feel blessed to have been part of DCAF's strategy development process and to have had the opportunity to contribute to the design of DCAF's new strategy.

📖 DCAF is uniquely positioned to "put security sector governance at the centre of the conversation - at the local, national, regional and global levels",

As its director, **Nathalie Chuard**, writes in the foreword: "Security without governance is not an option".

🌱 And indeed, security governance is at the heart of "the foundations of liberal democracies [which] are being challenged, and the coming years will be crucial for democratic governance".

👉 Take a look at DCAF's strategy and ambitions: <https://www.dcaf.ch/accountability>

In a few words, as in many, congratulations to DCAF and happy 25th anniversary 🎂



Azerbaijan: Stepping Up

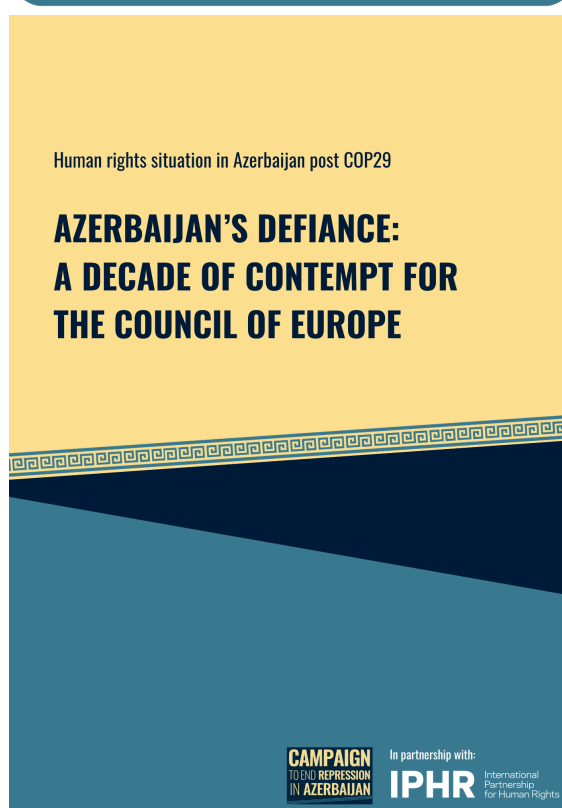
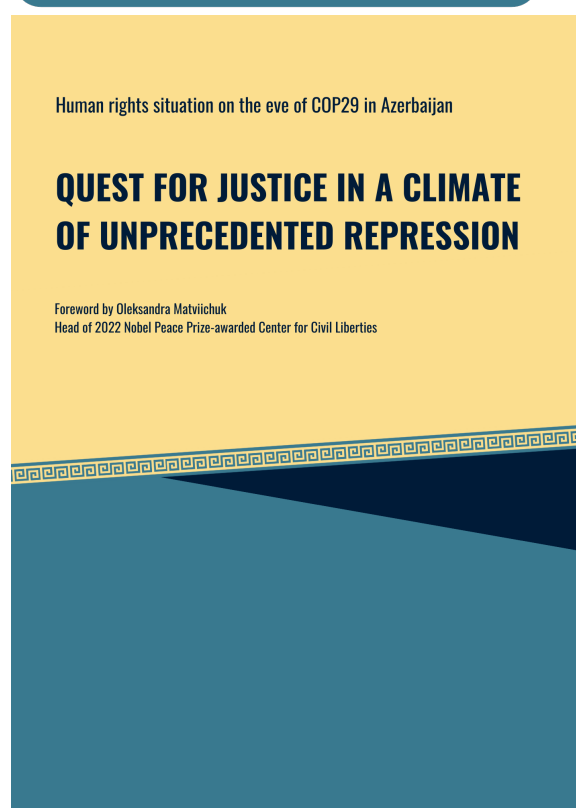
Since November 2023, P&C Action Lab is involved in supporting several Azerbaijani human rights defenders and their organisations in developing their campaign towards the 29th United Nations Climate Change Conference, to be held in Baku, Azerbaijan, in November 2024.

On 20 February 2024, the Climate Justice Initiative was established by five Azerbaijani NGOs, namely Public Association for Assistance to Free Economy, EcoFront, Women's Empowerment Center, Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Center, and Institute for Citizens Rights.

The detention on 29 April 2024 of human rights defender Anar Mammadli, chairperson of the Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Center, changed the plans of the coalition. P&C Action Lab continued to be engaged with the group and support it, and has been asked to coordinate the Campaign to End Repression in Azerbaijan, featured in various press outlets including "Libération", BBC, Global Citizen, Bloomberg, etc.

We continue to manage the Campaign under the leadership of a steering committee of Azerbaijani human rights defenders and international human rights organisations.

Patterns of Repression through Abuse of Criminal Law		
FABRICATED CHARGES	PURPOSE OF THE PROSECUTION	EMBLEMATIC TARGETS
 Tax Evasion	Disrupt NGO operation by targeting funding sources and undermining their credibility	Anar Mammadli, Rasul Jafarov
 Illegal Entrepreneurship	Criminalize NGO activities and restrict independent civic engagement	Intigam Aliyev, Rasul Jafarov
 Abuse of Power	Invent charges to delegitimise and suppress independent voices	Khadija Ismayilova
 Forgery in Public Office	Accuse activists of document falsification to block them from continuing their work	Mehman Haseynov
 Smuggling	Invent charges of illegal financial activities to hinder international funding and support	Anar Mammadli (2024)
 Invent High-Level Embezzlement	Impose severe charges to justify long-term imprisonment and tarnish reputations of civil society leaders	Intigam Aliyev
 Defamation	Threaten journalists and media outlets with lawsuits to silence criticism	Abzas Media, Toplum TV, and Meydan



WWW.FREE-ANAR.SITE



FREEDOM FOR ANAR MAMMADLI

END REPRESSION IN AZERBAIJAN #FREEANAR

The Way Forward

We know exactly why we do what we do — let us rise to the challenge together!

The beginning of Donald Trump's second presidency both reflects and accelerates shifts in the global human rights landscape — with massive consequences for people whose rights are already under threat. Political instability, policy reversals, and the erosion of international accountability are not only disrupting the work of defenders, organisations, and institutions — they're also emboldening authoritarian regimes across the world.

That's why we're contributing two new initiatives to support the human rights community in navigating this shifting landscape — and in shaping what comes next.

We're building a presence for the human rights community on the open-source social media platform Bluesky Social, called Human Rights Index. The goal: foster better narratives, create space for exchange, and test new ways to build a more connected, open, and resilient community.

Through Human Rights Compass, we're bringing together human rights defenders, researchers, and policymakers to share real-time analysis, map long-term trends, and strengthen resilience across the globe.

We launched these projects with partners, because, as a cause driven advisory group, we cannot remain inactive, when we believe our contribution could make a difference.

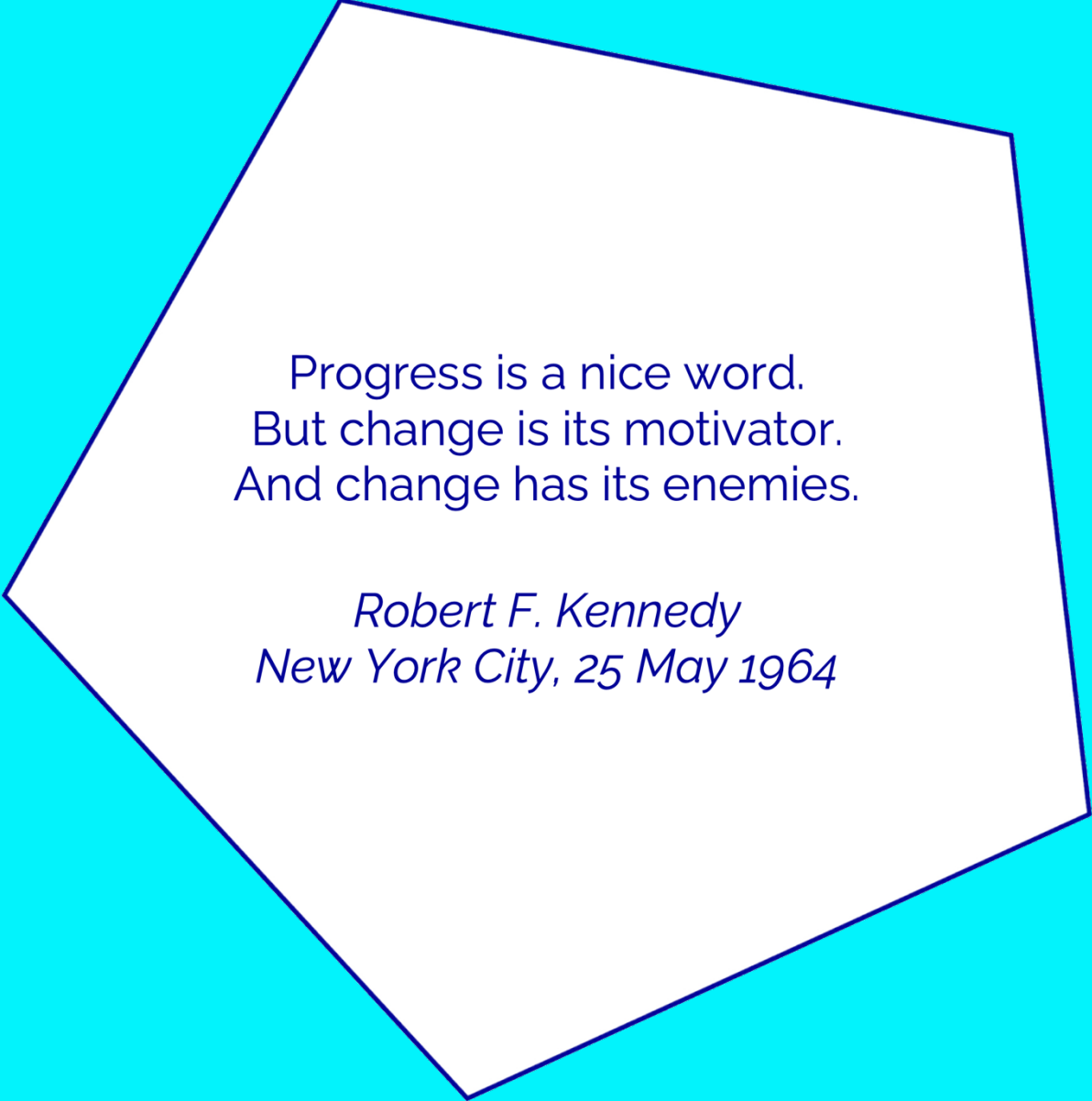
We will in 2025 also continue to provide our support with partners willing to work with us to promote:

- i. **Fundamental liberties** as enriched in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 16 December 1966;
- ii. **Climate justice**, in particular through the promotion of the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, and the protection of natural resources and biodiversity;
- iii. The **rule of law** and **equality before law**, in particular through the strengthening of state institutions, including those governing the security sector;
- iv. **Multilateralism** and the **reform of international organisations**, in order to promote the above-mentioned rights.

2024: Financial Overview

Expenditure	Total 2024
Human resources	CHF —
Project implementation	CHF 64 563.70
Communication	CHF 3 791.48
General Costs	CHF 5 895.24
Financial Costs	CHF 132.11
Total expenditure	CHF 74 382.53
Income	Total 2024
Donations and legacies	CHF —
Sponsorship	CHF —
Public and private grants	CHF 73 543.56
Membership fees	CHF 9.00
Other income	CHF 13.50
Total income	CHF 73 566.06
Results for the 2024 financial year (+/-)	CHF -816.47

A detailed financial overview is available in French upon request at lab@progress-change-actionlab.org.



Progress is a nice word.
But change is its motivator.
And change has its enemies.

*Robert F. Kennedy
New York City, 25 May 1964*

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