

DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

Candidate pack · November 2026

MEDIA DEFENCE

WELCOME

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in becoming our next Development Director.

Media Defence is an international human rights organisation that provides legal defence to journalists, citizen journalists and independent media who are under threat for their reporting. We are the only organisation in the world focused solely on this work, and since our founding we have supported over 2,500 cases in 110 countries.

The last few years have seen a worrying decline in press freedom. In response to their work, journalists around the world face increasing legal harassment, intimidation, and other forms of persecution by those seeking to silence them. Journalists face criminal defamation charges, SLAPPs, tax and financial-crime allegations, foreign-agent laws and the blocking of their content, often alongside intimidation, violence and imprisonment. This decline is reflected in Media Defence's work. In 2025 we supported 284 new cases, the highest number in our history.

At the same time, funding for this work has contracted. The withdrawal of major government donors in 2025 hit many of the organisations we work with, and competition for philanthropic and institutional funding is intense. Our ability to answer the next call from a journalist in the dock depends on the income this role secures.

The Development Director is a member of our Senior Management Team and reports to me. You will lead a team of two and be responsible for our income of over £3m a year, and for growing it substantially to double our emergency legal support for journalists to meet the growing need. You will set our fundraising strategy for the rest of our 2025–2029 strategy period. You will open relationships with new funders, including European institutional donors and philanthropists outside the established press freedom funders. You will advise me, the Board and colleagues on the strength and risks of our income base. You will also work closely with our legal and programme teams to turn our casework into evidence that funders can act on.

We are looking for someone with a strong record of securing and growing income for an international organisation, ideally from a mix of institutional donors, trusts and foundations. You will understand the compliance and reporting requirements that come with institutional grants. You will be able to build a fundraising strategy and deliver it: setting targets, managing a pipeline and a team, and deciding where to focus effort. Experience in human rights, media freedom or legal work would help but is not essential. The ability to explain complex legal work persuasively to funders is critical. You will also communicate clearly, lead with confidence and work well in a small, international, multilingual team.

We are open minded to backgrounds and are just as interested in your previous achievements as in your potential. I hope you will be excited with the opportunity to keep journalists reporting and choose to apply.

Carlos Gaio

Chief Executive Officer

ABOUT US



Media Defence is a charity that helps media to defend their rights. We support independent media, journalists and citizen journalists who are under legal threat by making sure that lawyers are available to defend them. We engage in strategic litigation to improve the regulatory environment for media freedom, make grants to organisations in various countries to run media defence programmes, and build the capacity of the lawyers and organisations we work with on issues of media law.

Media Defence was set up in 2008 and has established itself as a leader in the field. To date, we have supported over 2,500 cases, helping hundreds of journalists in over 110 countries. Our work has helped prevent over 300 years of detention for media workers and avoided over £500m in damages. We have supported 40+ partners and have trained 300+ lawyers.

Read our 2025 Annual Report

JOB DESCRIPTION

About the role

The Development Director has responsibility for fundraising, monitoring and evaluation, and impact reporting. You lead and develop your own team to bring a step change in our approach to fundraising, engagement and monitoring of our activities and programmes. You will unlock significant unrestricted funding and create an engaged community around our work. As Development Director, you will substantially build our annual income from European and US funders, and new philanthropy beyond them, open new relationships and turn existing ones into larger, longer-term partnerships.

As part of the Senior Management Team, you work closely with the CEO, Finance and Operations Director, Legal Director and Media Defence's board. You are a highly motivated individual, with great people skills and a growth mindset.

Responsible to	Chief Executive Officer
Key relationships	Chief Executive Officer, Legal Director, Development Team, Finance & Operations Director, Capacity Building Team, donors, partners and beneficiaries

Main responsibilities

Strategy and leadership

- Lead, motivate and evaluate a team covering fundraising and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL). Set clear targets and provide regular support and supervision.
- Together with the Chief Executive Officer, build and maintain strong partnerships with Media Defence's stakeholders and donors.
- Work with the Board of Trustees to strengthen its support for fundraising.
- Deputise for the Chief Executive Officer as required.

Fundraising

- Review and deliver an integrated fundraising strategy that diversifies Media Defence's income and grows it substantially, from both existing and new sources.
- Grow our income from funders in Europe and the United States, including European institutional funding, and develop existing donor relationships into multi-year partnerships.
- Oversee the maintenance of the database systems and tools used to manage donor relationships.
- Together with the Chief Executive Officer and the Finance and Operations Director, monitor donor-funded work so that it is delivered on budget and to the standards agreed with donors.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning

- Oversee the development and implementation of Media Defence's MEL framework.
- Together with the MEL Officer, use evidence of our impact to strengthen engagement with donors, partners and supporters.

Line management

- Line manage the Fundraising Officer and the MEL Officer, including recruiting to any vacant post.
- Recruit and manage volunteers.

Other

- Carry out other duties within the scope, spirit and purpose of the post.

Scope to shape the role

- Depending on the successful candidate's interests and experience, there is scope for the role to oversee internal and external communications. These are not requirements, and applicants are not expected to have experience in them.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

- Demonstrable experience of fundraising success in Europe and the US (individual donors, institutional funders, corporate partnerships), preferably in the charitable or social impact investment sector.
- Successful track record of building effective, long-term, high-value supporter relationships, including through the use of CRM databases.
- Experience of providing strategic leadership within an organisation.
- Strong problem-solving skills.
- Experience in managing a multi-function team, including mentoring and coaching.
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills, a collaborative working style and a pleasant, engaging manner in interacting with stakeholders, colleagues and the general public.
- Fluent written and spoken English is essential. Knowledge of other languages, particularly French or Spanish, is an asset.
- Experience of working internationally and in a diverse and multi-cultural environment.
- Willingness/ability to travel regularly to the US, Europe and other countries.
- Experience of successful budget planning and financial decision making.
- Excellent time management and organisational skills including the ability to manage effectively multiple projects in a fast-paced environment.
- Ability to manage a varied and pressured workload, sometimes to tight deadlines.
- Ability to work both independently and with others.
- Passion and commitment to the mission and vision of Media Defence.
- Exceptional attention to detail.
- Experience in journalism, law or human rights is desirable.
- Experience in marketing or communications, including digital and social media is desirable.

TERMS OF APPOINTMENT

Contract	Permanent, full-time (37.5 hours, occasional evening and weekend work)
Salary	£75,000-£80,000
Location	London, with hybrid working. We will also consider candidates based in the Netherlands with the correct right to work permit. We combine home working and office-based working to suit individual and organisational needs.

BENEFITS

- Hybrid working environment.
- Flexible working options to support those with caring responsibilities.
- Pension: Auto-enrolment in our pension scheme and up to 8% employer contributions dependent on matched contribution from employee.
- Office closed between 25 December and 1 January.
- Third Friday of each month off.
- Annual leave: 25 days annual leave plus bank holidays (increasing up to 30).
- Opportunity to carry over five days into the following annual leave year.
- Days start/finish times is flexible.
- On joining Media Defence, all employees are automatically able to access professional support through our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and a digital health app.
- We offer an enhanced maternity and paternity leave package.
- We provide a range of training and development tools to support our employees to improve or develop skills and knowledge for the benefit of both the individual and the organisation.
- Yearly training & development budget per person.

Equality and diversity are fundamental to our mission. We are committed to the recruitment and retention of individuals from diverse backgrounds and who reflect the diverse communities in which we operate.

HOW TO APPLY

If you are interested in applying to the role, please send your CV and Cover Letter (both in PDF format) to recruitment@mediadefence.org by **1 December 2026**.

Timeline

APPLICATIONS CLOSE	SHORTLISTING	FIRST-STAGE INTERVIEWS	SECOND-STAGE INTERVIEWS
1 December 2026	By 5 December 2026	Week of 7 December 2026 (online)	Week of 14 December 2026 (in-person)

Please note that first-stage interview will take place online.