

Academic freedom in turbulent times

2017 conference of the Scholars at Risk -- Ireland Network

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Rehahan Hall, Maynooth University

6 November 2017

Today, throughout the world, there are increasing threats to academic freedom – from authoritarian regimes and in regions at war or under occupation, but also by intolerant state and non-state actors. Academic freedom is also increasingly compromised within the academy itself by profit-maximisation models and audit cultures. How can we safeguard academic freedom and the conditions for critical thinking in these turbulent times? What measures can be taken to embed the principle of academic freedom as part of the international rights agenda? How can we defend it in practice as “managerial culture” becomes ever more prevalent within our universities and education institutions? Our speakers will draw on their first-hand experiences as well as their research to address these themes.

Speakers

Prof Philip Nolan, President, Maynooth University

Professor Philip Nolan, President, is the Chief Officer of the University, overseeing all operations from teaching and research to capital development and international initiatives. He is responsible for setting the future direction and goals for the University.

Prof Homa Hoodfar, Concordia University, Montreal

Professor Hoodfar, a Canadian-Iranian anthropologist noted for her contributions to Middle Eastern studies, was detained in Tehran's infamous Evin prison for a period of 112 days from 6th June to 26th September 2016 on fabricated charges of acting against the Iranian state. Her prosecutor also accused her of "dabbling in feminism". Since she also holds an Irish passport (through marriage to her late husband), there had been significant protests and other efforts on her behalf in Ireland last year. Building on work that she began during her imprisonment, she will speak on the importance of establishing academic freedom as a transnational right, drawing on traditions of critical thinking (and respect for critical thinking) from around the world.

Dr Jamil Khader, Dean of Research, Bethlehem University

Dr Jamil Khader is Professor of English and Dean of Research at Bethlehem University, Palestine. Before arriving at Bethlehem University in 2014, Dr Khader taught at Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey and Stetson University in Deland, Florida, where he served as the Director of the Gender Studies Program and the Co-Chair of the Diversity Council. Dr Khader is the author of numerous publications which appeared in various international journals and other collections. He is also the author of *Cartographies of Transnationalism in Postcolonial Feminisms: Geography, Culture, Identity, Politics* (Lexington Books 2012). Moreover, he co-edited with Molly

Rothenberg a collection of essays on the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek, entitled, *Žižek Now: Current Perspectives in Žižek Studies* (Polity 2013). This book has been slated for translation in German and Korean and will be published by the end of this year. His political commentary on Palestine has been featured on MERIP, Truth-out, Aljazeera in English, Jadaliyya, The Palestine Chronicle, Center for the Secular Research and Studies in the Arab World (Al-Hewar Al-Mutamaden), News with Conscience, and other venues. He delivered scores of papers at many international conferences and gave different talks on Palestinian culture and politics at different institutions around the world. Dr Khader is the recipient of various awards including a Research Award (2006), a Community Impact Award (2011), and a year-long teaching and research Fulbright Fellowship (2014) which he completed at Bir Zeit University, Palestine. He is currently working on two book-length projects, including one on the significance of Palestine for internationalist revolutionary discourses.

Ms Sinead O’Gorman, European Director, Scholars at Risk

Sinead O’Gorman is the European Director at Scholars at Risk. Based in Ireland, Ms. O’Gorman leads SAR’s international outreach efforts, including the design and implementation of SAR’s strategy for Europe, establishing national and regional SAR sections and increasing global participation in SAR’s protection and prevention activities. Ms. O’Gorman previously served as Deputy Executive Director at Scholars at Risks’ New York office, and has over 12 years’ experience in higher education, development cooperation and human rights. Prior to joining SAR, Ms. O’Gorman served as Program Officer-Africa at the Institute of International Education (IIE) and held program and research positions at the Council for Assisting Refugee Academics (CARA) in London and at the Irish Council for International Students (ICOS) in Dublin. She holds an MSc in Development Studies from the London School of Economics, an MA in French from the Université de Montréal, a BA in English and French from Trinity College Dublin and was a pensionnaire étranger at the Ecole normale supérieure (ENS), rue d’Ulm.

Turkish Speaker

This scholar of sociology holds a PhD in the field from a university in France, as well as an MA in contemporary Turkish history and society from a university in Turkey and a BA in international relations from a university in the US. She has five years of teaching experience at a Turkish university, where she led undergraduate and graduate-level courses in political science and sociology, including social movements, qualitative methods in social sciences, theories of nationalism, ethnicity and collective identity, multiculturalism and theories of democracy, and gender, society and politics. An accomplished researcher, this scholar has eleven years of experience researching the Muslim experience in Europe, identity and the Middle East, and European Union and Turkish politics. She has published three book chapters in English and French on migrant voices and perceptions of Islam in Europe, and five articles in English and French on Turkish politics and women's and minority issues in online journals and magazines. She has also presented her work in France, Germany, Switzerland, and Turkey. Unable to continue working safely in Turkey, this scholar is seeking teaching or research opportunities in Europe beginning immediately.

Syrian Speaker

This scholar is an accomplished researcher and professor in the field of food sciences. After graduating with a PhD in Food Process and Biotechnology from a university in Europe, he pursued a postdoctoral fellowship in France and returned to Syria to teach at the university level as an Assistant Professor for four years. His expertise is in the molecular composition of oils and fats, analyzing substances such as frying oil for quality and performance. In particular, he has focused his research on the lipids of fish such as rainbow trout and salmon. He has published in two scientific journals and participated in three international conferences. Currently in Qatar, this scholar is seeking opportunities beginning immediately to continue working and teaching in his field in a safe and stable environment.

DRAFT Programme

10.15 – 10.25 **Professor Philip Nolan**, President, Maynooth University

10.25 – 11.00 **Opening address**

11.00 – 11.30 – **Refreshments**

11.30 – 11.45 – **Ms Sinead O’Gorman**, European Director, Scholars at Risk

11.45 – 12.15 – **Prof Homa Hoodfar**, Professor of Sociology and Anthropology , Concordia University, Montreal

12.15 – 12.45 - **Dr Jamil Khader**, Dean of Research, Bethlehem University

12.45 – 1.00 – **Turkish Scholar**

13.00 – 13.15 - **SYRIAN Scholar**

13.15 – 14.15 – **Lunch**

14.15 – 15.15 – **Roundtable discussion (all speakers)**

15.30 – 16.30 – **SAR Clinic**