Friday 20th September

h. 09.00 – 10.00, Auditorium

**Plenary Session: Research Freedom and Innovation: the Global South point of view**

*Chair: Ester Gallo, University of Trento*

- Jama Musse Jama, President of the Somali Studies International Association
- Liviu Matei, Provost of Central European University (CEU) and Professor of Higher Education Policy

h. 10.00 – 10.30 Coffee break

h. 10.30 – 12.00, Room 006 Panel: ‘Defending academic freedom and freedom of expression. The role of universities and international organisations’

**Organizers:** Ester Gallo (University of Trento), Claudia Padovani and Francesca Helm (University of Padova), coordinators of SAR-Italia.

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Panel Abstract

Academic freedom and freedom of expression are traditionally conceived as essential for the development of higher education communities, a landmark of modern citizenship, and a key contribution to the common good. In recent times, the growth of authoritarianism and the rise of civil wars have threatened the autonomy of universities and resulted in violent attacks against higher education communities (researchers and students). The international organization Scholars at Risks (SAR) registers between September 2017 and August 2018 more than 270 incidents arising in 35 different countries (SAR Free to Think Reports 2017, 2018). Attacks range from killings and imprisonment, to prosecution, job loss, expulsion and travel restrictions. In many instances, persecuted academics and students are active in the defence of human rights in their country of origins. These attacks extend far beyond universities and involve professionals, human rights defenders and freedom of expressions more broadly. The 2019 World Press Freedom Index compiled by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) shows how hatred of journalists has degenerated into violence, contributing to an increase in fear. The number of countries regarded as safe, where journalists can work in complete security, continues to decline, while authoritarian regimes continue to tighten their grip on the media.¹ To fight against impunity the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) proposes a new United Nations Convention aimed at giving greater protection for journalists and journalism in face of a tide of violence and threats.² In dialogue with the international network Scholars at Risks, this panel discusses the present and potential role of universities, international organisations and civil society associations in developing a mutual collaboration in order to:

(a) Develop cooperation projects between different national contexts in order to protect/foster academic freedom and freedom of expression.

(b) Promote strategies of reception and ‘at-distance’ support for refugee academics/students – as well as writers, lawyers, journalists or artists - who are active in the public sphere and who search for long-term or temporary protection in different countries, most often in the Western world.

Panel Outline

Chair: Ester Gallo, University of Trento

Putting principles into action: how Universities can promote academic freedom.
The SAR Italy experience
Claudia Padovani, University of Padova; Francesca Helm, University of Padova

Scholars at Risk (SAR) is an international network of universities, founded in 1999 by academics and human rights defenders interested in promoting the principle of academic freedom and protecting academics whose lives are threatened. SAR carries out three types of activity - protection of threatened scholars; advocacy for higher education values; and research and education on themes of human rights and academic freedom - through a transnational network of over 400 universities, organised in national clusters. SAR Italy is the most recently established cluster. Constituted in February 2019, it brings together 15 universities and research institutions with different experiences in hosting and promoting academic values, and is currently developing approaches, practices and policies in offering protection and assistance to at-risk academics, and supporting their integration within the broader academic community during this time. Moreover, it works on strengthening international collaboration with other national sections, through international encounters, exchanges of good practices and the engagement of students in activities aimed at raising their awareness of the role and relevance of all university stakeholders in promoting the fundamental principles of higher education. This presentation will focuses on the Italian experience in the context of the broader international network, and on the challenges and opportunities of developing adequate frameworks for 'glocal' cooperation in this area.

The Need for Cooperation between Journalists’ and Media Organisations, Universities and International Organisations to Promote Freedom of Expression and Combat Fake News
Ernest Sagaga, International Federation of Journalists, Bruxelles

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) is the world’s largest organisation of media professionals, representing over 600,000 members from 187 unions and associations in more than 140 countries worldwide. The IFJ promotes collective action to defend human rights, democracy and media pluralism through freedom of political and cultural expression.

Freedom of expression and press freedom
Freedom of expression is often defined as a ‘meta right’, the implementation of which determines that of all other human rights. Press freedom is a corollary of the freedom of expression and finds its justification in the need to inform the public about issues of general interest in their society. Press freedom is underpinned by key principles of professional journalism as adopted by the IFJ, including the commitment to the truth, impartiality and the sense of responsibility. The IFJ publication ‘To Tell You the Truth; The Ethical Journalism Initiative’ is a reference for journalists in professional reporting.

The relevance of freedom of expression in an academic context
Freedom of expression involves expression which is both free but also subject to critique and dissent. These values are best nurtured in an academic environment offered by seats of learning such as universities. In the current context of flourishing fake news, these values are crucial in establishing facts and debunk falsehoods through research and informed debates.
The role of universities and international organisations in supporting the mandate of the IFJ

International organisations: The IFJ has an ECOSOC status within the United Nations' system and has an associate status with UNESCO, through which we engage a wide range of UN agencies (UN Security Council, General Assembly, Human Rights Council) for the implementation of legal instruments dedicated to the protection of journalists.

The IFJ has also partnerships with other regional inter-governmental organisations (Council of Europe, African Union) as well as humanitarian organisations (the International Committee of the Red Cross) focusing on our joint training and emergency initiatives for the safety of journalists.

Universities: In an ever changing world where journalism has to constantly adapt to new means of production, delivery and consumption of news information, universities offer the best platform to chart these changes and equip aspiring journalists with skills to navigate them. In particular, with respect to journalists’ safety, universities give students enough time, without the job pressure and deadlines, to master safety skills which they will need to use when they enter the profession later on. To this end, the IFJ has partnered with UNESCO and universities in the Arab World to produce a course on safety of journalists to be taught in schools and faculties of journalism. It also promotes closer cooperation between journalists’, media organisations and universities to provide to students workplace experience in newsroom and at its global secretariat in Brussels.

The World Academy of Sciences: Building Global Partnerships to Support Researchers and Students Displaced by War
Edward Lempinen, The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS), Trieste

For more than 35 years, The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS) has worked with many partners – including the government of Italy – to build science and engineering capacity in the developing world. The core belief is quite simple: When low-income countries can develop strength in research and technology, they are better able to address their own challenges in food production, health, energy and other areas, and to advocate for their own interests in international engagements. In 2016, TWAS began to receive scattered but troubling reports from its community of elite scholars and promising young scientists: Wars and conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen were forcing researchers to suspend their work and to flee their home countries. Some were ending up in neighbouring nations such as Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, where they were sometimes stuck in refugee camps. In other cases the scholars made it to Europe or North America. They wanted to continue their work, but they struggled to find positions.

For TWAS, this was an unprecedented situation. Our education and grants programmes are designed to prevent brain drain. Now the Academy was confronted with the need to support scientists who had already fled from their labs and classrooms. Within the Academy, leadership and staff focused on a set of questions: What is the nature of this migration? How big is it? What are the needs of these war-displaced scientists? And, most important, what should the Academy's role be, as a scientific and diplomatic organisation, in supporting them? In subsequent months, we have organised a major international workshop, produced a detailed report and documentary film that has shown all over the world. We have provided fellowships and awarded prizes to a handful of displaced scientists, and have worked to link other individual researchers with support agencies and universities in Europe, North America and Asia.

In the process, we have developed important networks – doing new work with longtime partners, and joining in related initiatives with new partners in many countries. As a result, TWAS has emerged as a hub in a loose but vital international coalition of academic organisations, scientific
bodies and agencies that support at-risk scholars. Today, TWAS has a number of emerging activities to support scientists displaced by war and conflict. Thanks to new funding from the Islamic Development Bank, we are setting aside a small number of new fellowships for displaced scientists, and we will create slots for early-career displaced scientists in the TWAS Young Affiliates programme. In particular, there are two partnership networks of central importance:

* In Italy, TWAS is among a group of 10 high-level scientific institutions and universities in Trieste and the Friuli Venezia Giulia region that have formally agreed to seek ways to support displaced scientists and science students in our region;

* TWAS is one of three core partners in Science International, along with the InterAcademy Partnership and the International Science Council. Science International is an ongoing effort to convene the world’s scientific expertise in the interests of developing policy ideas and engaging policymakers on issues of high importance to the global research community. Along with a number of partners – including agencies that support at-risk scientists, other scientific bodies and potential funding agencies – Science International is currently in a process to develop detailed policy and programmes to support war-displaced scientists globally.

The experience of the joint initiatives aimed at supporting refugee and asylum seekers scientists and students in Friuli Venezia Giulia

Lucia Piani, University of Udine, and Edward Lempinen, TWAS

Trieste, Italy, and the surrounding region of Friuli Venezia Giulia (FVG) comprise a capital of European science and science diplomacy, home to a number of national and international scientific organizations, research centres and universities. Many of them have a focus on developing countries and North-South cooperation, and beginning in about 2016, they began to hear reports of scientists and advanced students who were fleeing war in countries such as Syria, Yemen, Iraq and Afghanistan. In September 2018, the leaders of ten high-level scientific institutions operating in the region signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that contained an ambitious goal: "[to] offer opportunities to affected scientists to enrich their professional skills, to foster their human and professional development and integration, and encourage their reintegration in their country of origin once conditions allow." That agreement had its roots in a pioneering conference in March 2017 organised by The World Academy of Sciences in cooperation with the Italian National Institute for Oceanography and Applied Geophysics (OGS) and The Euro-Mediterranean University (EMUNI, Slovenia). Soon after, a top-level group of regional science leaders met at the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics to commission a cooperative effort. That began a year of study and planning, culminating in the MoU signing ceremony. One of the main aims of the MoU is to promote and develop opportunities and common initiatives to identify and advance professional and scientific skills of war-displaced scientists, engineers and others in science-based professions. The MoU institutions would do this primarily by finding fellowships and other temporary posts for researchers and students displaced from countries in conflict.

Within this framework, they also would also seek to build partnerships with existing international institutions that at-risk scientists —— Scholars at Risk, the Institute of International Education-Scholar Rescue Fund, the Humboldt Foundation in Germany, the European Commission’s Science4Refugees initiative, and others. Some initial steps, which could be part of an integrated intervention process, have already been identified:

1) Mapping and identification of skills among displaced scientists and students in the FVG region;
2) Creation and dissemination of a multilingual web page and other communication tools dedicated to the initiative, where will be collated all events and opportunities available from FVG’s scientific institutions;

3) Advertising availability of research and training positions specifically grouped according to required skills, within the network of the scientific institutions of FVG; and 4) inclusion in study and research programs, such as the Conference of Italian University Rectors (CRUI) and other international scholarship programmes; and

5) Exploring possible re-entry opportunities, exploiting existing networks, contacts and transnational resources that connect FVG to the countries of origin and to the diaspora communities.

The Trieste-FVG initiative represents one of Europe’s most ambitious efforts to meet its responsibilities to support war-displaced scientists and students. However, the effort also is encountering challenges. There is little concrete information on the number and skills of displaced science professionals and students in the region; while tens of thousands of migrants have entered Europe through Italy in recent years, a great many of them move on to Germany, France, the UK and Sweden. In addition, the Trieste-FVG group lacks dedicated staff and resources for the effort. Scholarships and fellowships in Italy are relatively rare, and the demand for such support in Europe and North America far exceeds the supply. And in the past 12-18 months, the political climate in the region and in much of Italy has turned wary of accepting and supporting migrants; this increases the complexity of advancing scientific programmes and raising awareness among policymakers and the public. To have a maximum beneficial impact, the MoU partners will have to navigate these challenges in the months and years ahead. That will likely place a premium on building broader, stronger networks in Italy and beyond.

The organizations that up to now have signed the agreement are: the University of Trieste; the Italian School for Advanced Studies (SISSA); the University of Udine; the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB); the InterAcademy Partnership (IAP); the Trieste International Foundation for Progress and Freedom of Sciences (FIT); the National Institute for Astrophysics (INAF); the National Institute of Oceanography and Experimental Geophysics (OGS); the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics, (ICTP); and The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS).

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International Advocacy for Academic Freedom: The Role of Students’ International Cooperation
Pietro Carra, Ion Folttea, Francesca Ongaro, Federica Tagliavini and Clelia Zardini
University of Trento

In this presentation we explore the role of students’ international advocacy in promoting cooperation between universities for the fostering of academic freedom. In doing so, we engage with the activities carried by Scholars at Risk (SAR), an international network of universities and research institutes whose aim is to promote the protection of the academic freedom principle and the defence of researchers and students at risks. This presentation is part of the Panel named: “Defending academic freedom and freedom of expression. The role of universities and international organisations”. In fact, the goal of this talk is to illustrate some of the actions taken by the students of Trento University promoting academic freedom.

Academic freedom and right to knowledge are the backbone of each university community that wishes to be successfully involved in international cooperation and global development. The University of Trento inaugurated its first advocacy seminar series in Spring 2019. The seminar had
unfolded in these following parts: the choice of a case study of violation of academic freedom, which was made by the students; background researches on the case; advocacy activities within the city of Trento in and off-campus. This experience was an opportunity for students to personally acknowledge the importance of academic freedom and to better understand the role of it as a necessity that leads to international cooperation.

This year, the students have decided to focus on the Amaya Coppers case study, this was chosen from three different options provided by SAR. Amaya is a Belgian-Nicaraguan medicine student and an activist. In fact, she is one of the leaders of “Movimiento 19 Abril”, a social movement organized by students, which strive for democratic reforms in Nicaragua. Moreover, the groups protest against the austerity reforms imposed by the actual president, Daniel Ortega, it also calls for its resignation. Amaya was arrested in September 2019 because of her activism, and accused of kidnapping, terrorism and illegal possession of weapons. Later, she was moved to “La Esperanza” a feminine prison outside Managua, where she has been reclused ever since. In March 2019, the President Ortega publicly promised to release within 90 days about 800 political prisoners incarcerated in Nicaragua. By doing it, the President hoped to re-open the discussions with the opposition. In the days we are writing this, May 2019, Amaya is still detained, so the case is still open. The presentation will so be structured: in the first part the students will briefly introduce the concept of academic freedom and will provide examples of its violation. In the second part, the students will present the selected case-study, finally they will describe the advocacy activities directly organized by them, such as recollection of signatures and brochures creation. The students will reflect on the fruitfulness and challenges related to international advocacy, and on how to implement future international cooperation between students’ communities towards the defending of academic freedom and freedom of expression.

Freedom of Expression in Turkey: Problems and Exit Strategies in Academia and beyond
Fazila Mat, OBC Transeuropa (Trento) and University of Victoria (CA), via skype.
(via skype)

The authoritarian turn of the Turkish government in recent years has heavily affected freedom of expression in Turkey. This paper aims at describing the situation of this fundamental right in the academia, with a reference to other areas where freedom of expression was severely impacted by the political climate, media freedom in particular. The paper will provide insights into the conditions faced by academics, who are subjected to systematic pressure, including judicial and economic. The paper focuses in particular on the case of the so-called “Academics for Peace”(AfP), who are charged with terrorism propaganda, just like many other journalists and human rights activists who showed a critical stance towards the government's deeds. Despite the ongoing pressure, the “Academics for Peace” have continued to perform their activities, developing innovative exit strategies which, in many cases, benefited from the support of international networks. In order to illustrate these exit strategies the paper will focus on the case of “the “solidarity academies”, launched by the AfP, which can be defined as “alternative education initiatives” carried out in different parts of the country since 2016. The paper will show how these “academies” are an outcome of the “solidarity nets”, created both within the country and abroad, to provide academics in restraints support, including financial and legal. To complete the picture the paper will show that other exit strategies have also been developed by media professionals in Turkey and in Germany – the latter promoted by expats and migrants from Turkey. Finally, the paper will highlight the importance of international solidarity actions in supporting the above-
mentioned initiatives. Further suggestions on the potential role of universities, international organisations and civil society associations in developing a mutual collaboration will be provided.

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Universities’ Involvement in the Protection of Human Rights Defenders:
How to Acknowledge and Support their Struggle?
Isolde Quadranti, University of Verona

Although the primary responsibility for the protection of human rights lies on states, individuals, groups and organs of society, all play important parts in furthering the cause of human rights. However, this aim is not feasible without acknowledging and supporting the role of human rights defenders (HRDs), those who promote and protect in a peaceful manner universally recognized human rights and fundamental rights of freedom at national and international levels, or, as it has been said, those who «generan estrategias para cambiar el mundo» [T. Hwoland, UNHCR].

Academic institutions have a long history in supporting civil society organisations (CSPs) and human rights activism in various way, among them collaborative research responding to the needs of civil society, actions fostering peaceful activism and awareness raising in human rights, human rights centres and law clinics for social justice, protective fellowships/scholarships for individuals to support their resilience in the native restrictive contexts and to access educational opportunities relevant to their work. «An effective protection of the dignity, physical and psychological integrity, liberty and security of human rights defenders is a prerequisite for the realization of the right to defend human rights» [OSCE, Guidelines on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, 2014, 2]. The involvement in the protection of human right defenders can be embedded in the universities’ internal advocacy for the social wellness. This knowledge and experience exchange is not unidirectional. Human rights defenders themselves can bring their own skills and experiences to the rescue of their host community. Good practices regarding the universities’ involvement for the protection of HRDs and the partnership with the civil society for this aim and human rights activism in general emphasise the added value that universities can bring for a proactive approach, the importance of mapping experiences and applying a gender perspective when approaching the issue of human rights defenders. It is recognized at the same time the relevance of ensuring a holistic approach and psychosocial support mechanisms during the temporary relocation of HRDs at risk. The measures that involve national, regional and international organizations for swift assistance and protection to human rights defenders in danger in third countries, such as emergency visas and facilitation of temporary shelter, have been considered the extrema ratio and not become a substitute for the overall objective to bring about an environment where human rights defenders can operate freely [see the European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders and the EU Human Rights Defenders Relocation Platform, an inventory of existing programs of temporary relocation promoted by the European Commission]. The Universities themselves can face repression through a variety of legal, economic and administrative means, and academics can be victims of threats. The annual report SAR Free to Think 2018 provides documentary evidence that attacks carried out by both state and non-state actors on scholars on higher education communities around the world occur with alarming frequency using a range of methods with the common motivation to control or silence higher education institutions and their personnel. The monitoring project collects data in about 47 countries concerning scholars and students killed, arrested, or subjected to other coercive force in connection with their expressive activity. Nonetheless, as the same report states, inevitably a large number of cases is not included.
This report aims to witness about one of these still not well known attacks on higher education: the case of human rights violations and incidents occurred in Popayan-Colombia in the framework of the protests realized by University of Cauca (UniCauca) students, from October to December 2018.

Back in 2009, the Special Rapporteur of the situation of human rights defenders following her visit to Colombia included students and youth activists in the categories of defenders who suffered a situation of persistent insecurity and a systematic stigmatization by Government officials and non-State actors. Even though the Peace Agreement between the Government of Colombia and FARC-EP has «a well-developed human rights based approach», the national landscape highlights an alarming increase in the number of threats and attacks against HRDs above all in rural area, where there continue to be the major disparities in the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights [Situation of Human rights in Colombia. Report of the OHCHR for the period from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2018]. The demonstrations of the last year took place in the framework of the national strike of the Colombian public higher education students, to protest against the decision of the national government to reduce the budget for the public higher education. Also the current UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Michel Forst, in his November 2018 end of mission to Colombia final statement, expressed concerns about the situation of students engaged in the national strike. Wounded and arrested students during the demonstration were needed to persuade the Government to open negotiations and to afford a wider participation in the public policy-making related to the high education. At least for now, it does not seem that the agreement has been implemented by the national authorities. For these reasons, the situation has been considered an attack to the higher education.

12.45 – 14.15 Lunch Break: Restaurant ‘La Rosa D’Oro’
Piazza Santa Maria Maggiore, 21, 38122 Trento TN
https://www.ristoranterosadoro.com/

14.15 - 17.00 Follow-up Roundtable:
‘Multi-level cooperation to defend academic freedom and freedom of expression: Main points emerged and future plans’
Venue: Department of Sociology and Social Research
Via Verdi, 26 - (Meeting Room 3rd Floor)

Confirmed Participants:
Sara Ballarini, Peace Brigades International (PBI) and Rete ‘In Difesa Di’
Francesca Caprini, Press Office – YAKU Onlus and Rete ‘In Difesa Di’
Pietro Carra, University of Trento, Advocacy Student on Academic Freedom
Marzia Deflorian, CARITRO Research Fellow on ‘Shelter Cities in Europe’
Edward Lempinen, The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS), Trieste
Lorenzo Ferrari, Amnesty International
Ester Gallo, University of Trento (DSRS) and SAR-Italy Co-coordinator
Fazila Mat, OBC Transeuropa (Trento) and University of Victoria (CA), via skype.
Claudia Padovani, University of Padova (SPGI) and SAR-Italy Co-coordinator
Simone Penasa, University of Trento (Law)
Lucia Piani, University of Udine
Isolde Quadranti, University of Verona
Carla Savastano, University of Trieste and SAR-Italy Steering Committee
Ernest Sagaga, International Federation of Journalists
Albert Schram, Independent Scholar
Federica Tagliavini, Advocacy student on Academic Freedom
Enzo Vitalesta, Press Office, Yaku Onlus