Summary Report on Activities

2018–2019
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S MESSAGE: FORWARD TOGETHER

TWENTY YEARS AGO, inspired by the courage of threatened colleagues around the world, we said “there ought to be a way to help.” Our network was born from that spirit, and that spirit has motivated our work ever since. Scholars at Risk (SAR) is a practical, collective way to meet the urgent needs of scholars, students and universities under threat.

In our first ten years, we developed core activities providing assistance to individuals targeted for their ideas. These include arranging teaching and research positions for those unable to work safely in their home countries, and campaigns for those unable to travel due to prosecution or imprisonment. Over this period SAR pioneered a new solidarity among higher education institutions around the world, building what has become a network of over 500 institutions in 39 countries, organized into national SAR sections and “partner networks” with leading associations, making SAR services accessible to scholars and students around the world. Over our first twenty years, this community has helped over 1500 scholars and created over 1200 positions at 300 host campuses, representing over US $20 million of support for individuals.

We will always prioritize assistance for individuals. But with the level of threats we see today—SAR’s caseload is over 700 scholars—case-by-case action is not enough. So over the last decade the SAR community has developed a range of activities to do even more. These include SAR’s annual Free to Think report (which this year has documented over 324 attacks on higher education in 56 countries), student advocacy, legal clinics, regional advocacy, courses, scholar trainings, and academic freedom workshops, all aimed at building understanding, demanding accountability, and increasing security.

As we mark our first twenty years together, with gratitude to all who have helped, we also look forward: to welcoming more institutions to our network; to new partners and new supporters who make our work possible; to doing even more; to helping more scholars.

Looking forward together,

ROBERT QUINN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Scholars at Risk (SAR) is an international network of institutions and individuals whose collective mission is to protect scholars and promote academic freedom.

The environment in which SAR fulfills its mission is increasingly difficult, placing growing demands on our services. Authoritarian regimes on the rise are actively working to restrict academic freedom, while an unprecedented refugee crisis has record numbers of scholars seeking help. The higher education community is responding. Our global network is now over 500 universities, colleges and associations in 39 countries. These are organized into 13 national sections with several more forming. The sections are joined by 12 partner networks—partnerships with leading higher education networks that help extend the reach of SAR activities to every region of the world. All this means more opportunities to help scholars, raise awareness, and demand greater protection for universities, scholars, students, and academic freedom.

Growing Our Network
Professor Adam Braver, IAC representative and SAR-United States section Chair, leads a discussion on academic freedom at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona in Spain.

The voice of the network membership is SAR’s International Advisory Committee (IAC), comprised of representatives of SAR sections and partner networks. The IAC embeds an international perspective into SAR’s structure and governance and provides a forum and communication channel for all involved. This allows for greater coordination of activities across regions, more sharing of best practices leading to improved support for scholars, and more opportunities to advance academic freedom worldwide.

SAR SECTIONS & PARTNER NETWORKS

- Academy for Research and Higher Education
- Mexican Association for International Education (AMPEI)
- Cara-SAR UK Universities Network
- Communauté Université Grenoble Alpes
- Compostela Group of Universities
- Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC)
- European Students Union (ESU)
- European Universities Association (EUA)
- International Migration, Integration and Social Cohesion (IMISCOE)
- Magna Charta Observatory
- SAR Canada
- SAR Denmark
- SAR Finland
- SAR Germany
- SAR Ireland
- SAR Italy
- SAR Norway
- SAR Slovakia
- SAR Sweden
- SAR Switzerland
- SAR United States
- Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences
- Swissuniversitie
- UAF-SAR Netherlands and Belgium
- Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe (UNICA)

“When thinking about what it takes to make a more just world, it is always worth pausing to consider the hundreds of scholars worldwide who face daily risks on our behalf to think, debate, share, and challenge ideas. They are not the cautionary tale, they are all of us.”

- ADAM BRAVER
  Steering Committee Chair, SAR-United States National Section & Faculty Coordinator, SAR Student Advocacy Seminars

Above: Convening scholars and section members for the launch of SAR-Denmark.
SAR’s core protection work provides direct assistance to threatened scholars, including by arranging temporary research and teaching positions at SAR member institutions and a range of other services.

Scholars Seeking Assistance
Due to spreading conflicts and pressures on academics and universities around the world, SAR has continued to receive an elevated number of requests in recent years; this year receiving 581 new applications, with the majority from Turkey and Syria and large numbers from across the Middle East and North Africa, Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, and South Asia. SAR currently handles a caseload of over 700 scholars seeking assistance.

Universities & Colleges Respond
The global SAR Network is responding to these pressures on academic freedom by assisting scholars who are directly affected. Together, we helped a record 409 scholars this year, including arranging 115 positions. These positions represent over $4.6 million contributed by host campuses and partners that directly supports at-risk scholars and their families.

Trainings & Other Services
Beyond arranging positions, SAR provides scholars with advice, legal referrals, career advisement, and other services, and has provided these to 383 scholars this year. SAR staff lead training workshops for scholars and hosts, including four trainings this year for 177 participants. The trainings share best practices for hosts and prepare scholars to graduate from SAR support by identifying next opportunities, in exile or upon return.

Emergency Assistance Grants
SAR also provides gap-filling emergency assistance grants. This year SAR provided 33 emergency grants to scholars for in-country needs; travel for interviews, conferences, or to take up new positions; visa fees; legal costs; or family support for those detained or facing charges.

HOW SAR HELPS

The chart at right shows the journey of a scholar seeking help. SAR typically works with scholars for 3–5 years before “graduation” from SAR’s direct assistance. All numbers reflect 2018-19 levels

TOP 5 RISKS TO SCHOLARS

- ARREST / IMPRISIONMENT
- INSECURITY / CONFLICT
- WRONGFUL DISMISSAL
- HARASSMENT / THREATS
- KILLING / DISAPPEARANCE

Scholars Apply for Assistance
Scholars apply or are referred to SAR for assistance; SAR evaluates their situation for one (or both) of two options.

581 scholar applications

TOP 5 ORIGIN COUNTRIES
Turkey
Syria
Yemen
Iran
Brazil

OPTION 1
Safe Return
73 host universities
$4.6 M direct support
115 scholar placements

OPTION 2
Transition
33 emergency grants
6 trainings
177 participants

SAR refers appropriate candidates to network members for possible temporary positions.

Advice & Other Assistance
SAR provides advice or assistance with relocation, integration and adjustment, job skills or other services.

383 scholars assisted

New Opportunities
98 universities
22 countries

TOP 5 HOST COUNTRIES
Germany
Netherlands
USA
Norway
Canada

Students
96 scholar graduations

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KILLING / DISAPPEARANCE
“Thank you very much, you helped me to breathe and work with a clean mind. The things that you are doing, saving innocent people around the world, is priceless. It is so valuable, so important.”

– A scholar of chemistry education from Turkey at a SAR member university in Norway

“I have no words to express my gratitude and admiration for the support I got from SAR for the last several years. SAR helped me to build my career and get tremendous opportunities to get experience but also your support has protected me from persecution and torture in Ethiopia. Through SAR support, I have been able to contribute bringing political transformation in Ethiopia. We are witnessing significant changes in Ethiopia. Thank you for all the support! I am deeply interested to contribute my share and pay back for the support I have received from SAR. Thank you for your personal follow up and advising me during the last few years.”

– A scholar of law and human rights from Ethiopia in the United States

**SCHOLARS HOSTED**

During the 2018–2019 academic year, host campuses and other partners created positions for the scholars listed below by their discipline and country. The list includes scholars whose positions commenced that year, positions arranged that will be taken up shortly, as well as those offered positions which have not yet commenced due to arrest, travel restrictions, visa denials, or other external factors.

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<th>Discipline</th>
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<td>Health Services Research (Saudi Arabia)</td>
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<td>Social Sciences (40)</td>
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<td>Anthropology &amp; African Literature (D.R. Congo)</td>
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<td>Geography &amp; Urban Planning (Iran)</td>
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Berlin School of Economics
Erasmus University Medical Center (Erasmus MC)
Erasmus University Rotterdam (International Institute of Social Studies)
European University of Viadrina
Fordham University
Forum Transregionale Studien
Freie Universität Berlin
Georgetown University
Goethe University Frankfurt
Hanken School of Economics
Harvard University
HES-So
Hogeschool van Amsterdam (HvA)
Humboldt University of Berlin
Hunter College, CUNY
Julius Kühn-Institut
Justus Liebig University Giessen
Karlsruhe Institute of Technology
Kristiania University College
Leiden University
Leipzig University
Linnaeus University
Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich
McGill University
Mid Sweden University
National University of Ireland, Galway
Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences
New York University
Nord University
Norwegian University of Science & Technology, NTNU Trondheim
Oslo Metropolitan University
Radboud University Nijmegen
Ruhr University Bochum
San Diego State University
Simon Fraser University
Södertörn University
Technische Universität Dresden
Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM)
Université Libre de Bruxelles
University of Agder
University of Amsterdam
University of Bergen
University of Bremen
University of British Columbia
University of California, Riverside
University of California, San Diego
University of Cologne
University of Connecticut
University of Copenhagen
University of Duisburg-Essen
University of Freiburg
University of Geneva
University of Gothenburg
University of Göttingen
University of Guelph
University of Hamburg
University of Jena
University of Kassel
University of Marburg
University of Oslo
University of Ottawa
University of Portsmouth
University of Potsdam
University of Siegen
Uppsala University
Utrecht University
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
Vrije Universiteit Brussel
 Wageningen University
Western Norway University of Applied Sciences
Western University
Xavier University

SAR’s advocacy work aims to increase protection for vulnerable individuals by documenting the problem of attacks on higher education and seeking accountability of perpetrators in order to deter future attacks.

Free to Think 2019, the annual report of SAR’s Academic Freedom Monitoring Project, documents 324 attacks on university communities in 56 countries (up from 294 attacks in 2018). Dozens of volunteer monitors throughout SAR’s global network contribute by submitting and verifying incident reports and by supporting related advocacy. Since 2011, SAR has documented 1,023 incidents involving 1,455 attacks on higher education in 101 countries.

Free to Think 2019 highlights violent attacks on higher education communities, wrongful prosecutions of scholars, pressures on student expression, and restrictions on travel, among other global pressures. The report notes in particular tensions in Brazil, China, India, Sudan, and Turkey; and recommends actions to increase protections for academic freedom.

Addressing Academic Freedom in China: Obstacles to Excellence: China’s Quest for World-Class Universities, released in both English and Chinese, maps threats to academic freedom that jeopardize China’s higher education ambitions.

Download Report
bit.ly/33xosOG

Download Report
bit.ly/2Q39LiC
Research & Learning

SAR’s research and learning work aims to increase security for scholars and universities by increasing understanding of academic freedom and related higher education values among states, higher education communities, and the public.

This year SAR continued to disseminate and promote its publications. Promoting Higher Education Values: A Guide for Discussion explores the meaning of academic freedom, why it matters, and how to respond when it is threatened. Promoting Higher Education Values: Workshop Supplement offers exercises and advice for self-study by individuals or for group discussion in workshops or classes.

Building on these publications, SAR and partners co-created an online course on academic freedom called Dangerous Questions: Why Academic Freedom Matters, the course features interactive video lectures, animations, quizzes, polls, and exercises to make the material accessible and to encourage discussion. The course has now engaged more than 2,300 participants from 120+ countries, reflecting the international demand for information about academic freedom.

“This was the model of an effective, well-designed online course. The mixture of learning activities and assessments was engaging and effective, as was the array of resources in various formats. In my academic life, I do a lot of work on effective course design and accessible pedagogy, and this course was a wonderful exemplar of both. It was great to be able to choose among delivery formats (video or transcript for lectures, for instance), and the variety of interesting content and activities kept me engaged and challenged.”

– ONLINE COURSE PARTICIPANT

Advocacy

SAR-affiliated legal clinics increase monitoring coverage while training students on academic freedom and human rights. Students produce reports on specific incidents involving attacks on higher education and analyze country conditions relating to academic freedom. This year, students in 8 SAR clinics helped prepare academic freedom reports on Ethiopia, Colombia, and Côte d’Ivoire for submission to national and international human rights bodies. Together with partners across the Americas, SAR launched the Americas Academic Freedom Hub in February 2019, a regional collaboration on advocacy in support of issues relating to academic freedom in the Americas.

Students participating in Student Advocacy Seminars play an increasingly important role in SAR’s advocacy work. Seminar students develop research and leadership skills while advocating on behalf of imprisoned scholars and students identified by SAR’s Scholars in Prison Project. This year, students in 14 seminars helped SAR campaign for 50 imprisoned scholars and students.

Seminar participants put their advocacy skills into practice at SAR’s annual Student Advocacy Day in Washington, D.C. This year, 40 students and faculty from 8 colleges and universities exchanged best practices in advocating for imprisoned scholars, discussed advocacy strategies with guest experts, and held 50 meetings with elected officials.

Online Course on Academic Freedom

An animation from Dangerous Questions, an online course on academic freedom, produced as part of an Erasmus+ project by SAR, the University of Oslo, UNICA, University of Ljubljana, EUA, EAIE, Al-Fanar Media, and University World News.

“Prior to taking the seminar last semester, I wasn’t aware at all of the power students had. After taking the seminar, I understood the power we wield as students and how we could use it, but I never thought it would open such doors.”

– IZZIDINE EL-MUFTI
Carleton University student discussing his participation in the seminars and Student Advocacy Day

Student Advocacy Day

Students at SAR’s Student Advocacy Day gather for meetings on Capitol Hill.
SAR’s biennial Global Congress brings together leading scholars, advocates, students, and professionals to rethink issues of academic freedom and related values, to learn from each other, and to help shape SAR’s agenda for the coming years.

The 2020 Global Congress will be convened March 25–28 in partnership with Johns Hopkins University and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). The 2020 Global Congress theme, Truth, Power & Society: The Promise of Higher Education in Challenging Times reflects three core roles of higher education: research and teaching leading to new insights and understanding, evidence-based contributions to public discourse and policy, and meaningful engagement with the broadest public good. How scholars, students, leaders, and the public understand these roles goes to the heart of increasing pressures on higher education around the world—from outside infringements on autonomy to violent protests to wrongful prosecutions, imprisonment and more. The event will include workshops on protection, advocacy, and higher education values, followed by keynotes, plenaries, parallel sessions, and networking aimed at promoting SAR-related and academic freedom-related activities.

The establishment of SAR Europe represents the culmination of nearly two decades of partnership between European higher education institutions and the global SAR Network.

SAR launched its European office—SAR Europe—in November 2018 in partnership with Maynooth University, Ireland. The establishment of SAR Europe formalized nearly twenty years of partnership between European higher education institutions and SAR in protecting scholars and promoting academic freedom. SAR Europe’s mandate is to grow, support, and coordinate the activities of national SAR sections and partners across Europe, and to strengthen our collective voice in Europe for the greater protection of scholars and for increased respect for academic freedom worldwide.

The launch was held at the European Parliament in Brussels on November 28, 2018 in association with a roundtable discussion on academic freedom. The event was hosted by Wajid Khan, Member of the European Parliament, and featured remarks by Member of European Parliament, Claude Moraes; Vice-President of the European Parliament, Mairead McGuinness; Robert Quinn, SAR’s Executive Director; Sinead O’Gorman, Director of SAR Europe and Professor Mark Maguire, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Maynooth University.

Maynooth University and SAR have partnered since 2008, when Maynooth became an active member of the global SAR network, hosting at-risk scholars, organizing events, and contributing to SAR’s Academic Freedom Monitoring Project. Together with eight other universities in Ireland and Northern Ireland, Maynooth University was a founding member of the SAR Ireland Section in 2009. SAR Europe is now established as a center embedded within the Maynooth University Social Sciences Institute (MUSSI).
SAR is grateful for the generosity of our supporters with special thanks to the Office of the Provost and New York University for hosting our network headquarters and the National University of Ireland, Maynooth for hosting SAR Europe. We are especially grateful for the European Union’s Erasmus+ programme. We give thanks to the many colleagues and partners around the world who have gone out of their way to help threatened and refugee scholars, especially those who have helped arrange visits, host events, mentor scholars, or who have otherwise provided assistance or advice.

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FY19 SUMMARY

Total Revenue $2,140,151
Total Expenses $1,904,442
Protection Services $992,738
Monitoring & Advocacy $591,232
Research & Learning $158,874
Admin & Fundraising $161,598
Leveraged for At-Risk Scholars $4,678,803
(46% Return on protection costs)

* matching gift
List from Sept. 2018 – Sept. 2019

Scholars at Risk is an independent not-for-profit corporation, hosted at New York University.
Looking Forward

In 2020, the Scholars at Risk Network will celebrate its 20th anniversary and 10th Global Congress, to be held March 25–28 in partnership with Johns Hopkins University and AAAS. SAR invites you to join the conversation on academic freedom and free inquiry by attending the Congress and helping to set SAR’s agenda for the coming years.
The need for SAR’s assistance continues to increase. We encourage you to become a part of our global network and our community of supporters.

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