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## SAR responds to COVID-19: Now more than ever

With this newsletter we share our best wishes for your health and well-being in these challenging times, together with our hopes for a speedy and safe resolution of the crisis and our thanks to the many experts, inside and outside of higher education, in an extraordinarily broad range of disciplines, who are playing a vital role in responding to the epidemiological, economic, political and cultural dimensions of the response, as they will to the eventual recovery and restoration of essential functions and services. We need your work now more than ever.

We also want to thank our global SAR network, partners, donors and friends for your support as we navigate together the uncertainties regarding the coronavirus (COVID-19). It has been an eventful month since our last newsletter, to say the least. With extraordinary support from our co-hosts, sponsors, speakers, network members and staff, we transitioned the [2020 SAR Global Congress](#) to a virtual format and delivered a high-quality, two-day online program on March 26-27, including appearances **Johns Hopkins University President Ronald Daniels** and **Wellesley College President Paula Johnson**, and the launch of the first global [Academic Freedom Index](#), an important new tool for future advocacy. The [Congress videos](#) are now on the SAR website. We invite you to view and to **share the links with friends** as a way of introducing them to our work.

As with so many, the SAR offices have gone to fully remote operations. Remote technologies are at the heart of our global network, so the transition has not been too difficult. That said, we have begun assessing the **possible impacts on our work** of a prolonged period of social distancing, reduced travel, and few in-person meetings. **Our priority is the impact on SAR-assisted scholars and their hosts**, including those currently in positions which may be expiring, in which cases we are exploring possible extensions or transfers to new positions at other institutions in the same territory, and those not in positions seeking urgent help, in which cases we are exploring remote fellowships and other distance options. Advocacy for [scholars-in-prison](#), especially those affected by COVID-19, and [Free to Think](#) monitoring are ongoing, and the

[Dangerous Questions MOOC](#) on academic freedom has a session starting on **April 20, 2020**.

As we look forward 30, 60, 90 and 120 days, data points will emerge that will allow for longer-term planning, and we will share more as the situation develops. At the same time, we are **seeking out the opportunities** in the current situation. What systems, processes or materials have we wanted to improve? What new services or modes of engagement with network members have we contemplated (e.g. a virtual speaker series), but not yet tried? What have we wanted to try, but just never had time? We would love to hear any suggestions you may have. Please send them to me at [rquinn@nyu.edu](mailto:rquinn@nyu.edu).

Finally, allow me to share with you, as I have with the SAR staff and Board, that now is the time for us **to take care of ourselves and each other**, including giving ourselves professional and personal “slack”; making sure we are sleeping and eating well; getting exercise (while maintaining social distancing); reaching out to each other for contact and support; and comforting those most impacted.

As I said in my opening remarks in the [first virtual Congress session](#), our work and our network are at their core about **resilience**. We exist to help colleagues and the higher education sector overcome pressures and threats. That work matters now more than ever. That resilience was on display the last few weeks. I thank you for being an important part of that resilience, and look forward to sharing more in the coming weeks, just as I look forward to meeting together in-person as soon as conditions permit.

Until then thank you, be well, and let us know if we can be of any service.



Robert Quinn  
Executive Director

PS: Reminder to save the week of November 16-20, 2020. Conditions permitting, we hope to see you in New York for the release of SAR's annual [Free to Think](#) report and the close of SAR's 20th anniversary year.

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## Educating for Academic Freedom in Turbulent Times

With the recent shift of higher education to a landscape that is largely online, the global pandemic has presented countless challenges and opportunities for learning at all levels. In this unprecedented time, key questions emerge: Why should society value

quality higher education during such a critical time? Why is it important to educate the public on academic freedom during this public health crisis?

**DANGEROUS  
QUESTIONS:**

**WHY  
ACADEMIC  
FREEDOM  
MATTERS**

**?**

“

The global shift to technology-mediated and distance education that was suddenly forced on us by the pandemic is forcing educators to reassess their assumptions about teaching, learning, and research. To a greater extent than ever before, post-secondary educators are rethinking accessibility and social responsibility in the context of their classes and their institutions. Students need to be a part of this conversation. The Dangerous Questions MOOC equips them to be well-informed participants in the discussion that is sweeping the educational sector.

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*Dr. Shannon Dea*  
*Professor, Department of Philosophy*  
*Vice-President, Faculty Association of University of Waterloo (FAUW)*  
*University of Waterloo*

Beginning on **April 20**, Scholars at Risk invites these conversations during the fifth run of the free online course, **Dangerous Questions: Why Academic Freedom Matters**, developed in collaboration with the University of Oslo and partners on the Academic Refuge Project. Since its initial launch, the MOOC has enrolled over 2,800 participants from 126 countries. [SAR staff](#) are available to discuss how you can integrate the MOOC into your existing online course.

[Register Today»](#)

## Scholars of the Month

*SAR scholars are at-risk higher education professionals that exemplify the pursuit of academic freedom, freedom of expression, and university values. If your institution is interested in hosting a SAR scholar, please email [apply.scholarsatrisk@nyu.edu](mailto:apply.scholarsatrisk@nyu.edu).*



**A Scholar of  
Architectural Design  
from Turkey**

This junior scholar studies the interplay between biopolitics, urban



**A Scholar of  
Communications and  
Journalism from Iran**

This scholar and political satirist is a prolific writer who has authored



**A Scholar of Electronics  
and Computer Education  
from Turkey**

This scholar has nearly two decades of university-level teaching experience

infrastructure, and history. He has lecturing and research experience at Turkish universities. He has published books in his field, and shared his research at several academic conferences. He faces risk of arrest, harassment, and loss of position in Turkey and seeks research and/or teaching opportunities in Europe or Canada beginning September 2020. (Turkey 1113)

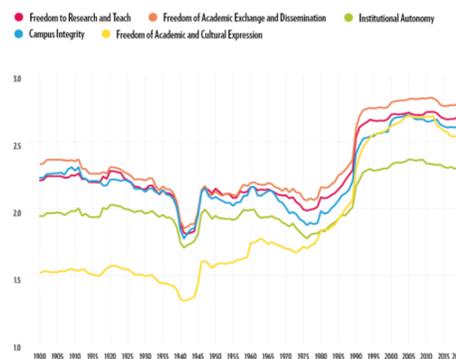
numerous books, academic articles, and newspaper articles. He has substantial experience as a researcher, editor, and columnist, both in academia and the general media. His research interests include political satire, with a particular lens on the Middle East. This scholar reports loss of position, harassment, and intimidation due to the content of his writing and seeks research opportunities in Scandinavia beginning September 2020. (Iran 656)

in Turkey and the US, where he led courses on wireless sensor networks, cognitive radio networks, and cloud computing, among others. He has also published numerous articles on these topics in international and refereed academic journals. This scholar faces risk of arrest, harassment, and loss of position in Turkey and seeks research opportunities in Canada beginning immediately. (Turkey 859)

**All Scholars Seeking Assistance »**

## Launch of the Academic Freedom Index!

In collaboration with Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi), the Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, and the V-Dem Institute, we are pleased to announce the launch of the Academic Freedom Index (AFi), a groundbreaking new tool for tracking levels of respect for academic freedom around the world, from 1900 to 2019. Along with the Index's launch, GPPi and SAR have also released a policy paper that we hope will be used to inform further research and guide members of the higher education community, government officials, and civil society in taking meaningful steps to protect and promote academic freedom.



**Read More»**

# Freedom of Speech in Universities: Who Draws the Line?



who cross it.

SAR's Executive Director Rob Quinn speaks with the BBC's Robert Lustig as part of a series to explore free speech on university campuses. Rob discusses where the line is drawn regarding freedom of speech in universities, who draws it, and what happens to those

[Listen Here»](#)

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## SAR calls on Iran to release Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali amidst concerns of COVID-19

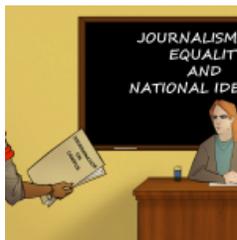
Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali, a scholar of disaster medicine wrongfully convicted and sentenced to death in Iran, is suffering from rapidly deteriorating health in Evin Prison, Iran, and is at high risk of experiencing adverse effects of COVID-19. In an effort to contain the pandemic, Iranian authorities have reportedly released 85,000 individuals from prisons but have not released Dr. Djalali, who has been in prison since April 2016 and has repeatedly been denied access to medical care. Iran and the rest of the world would greatly benefit from Dr. Djalali's expertise in disaster medicine to combat COVID-19. Join us in calling for Dr. Djalali's immediate and unconditional release.



[Take Action»](#)

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## Events



### **Dangerous Questions: Why Academic Freedom Matters | April 20, 2020 | Online**

The EU-funded 'Academic Refuge' project, on which Scholars at Risk is a partner, will hold a three-week online course that explores the meaning of academic freedom and how it relates to core higher education and societal values.

[Register Today »](#)

## InSPIREurope Stakeholder Forum | June 8, 2020 | Paris, France

The 2020 InSPIREurope Stakeholder Forum will bring together stakeholders from across Europe involved in activities to support researchers at risk. Further information forthcoming.

[Read More »](#)

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### Connect with Us



Scholars at Risk is an independent not-for-profit corporation, hosted at New York University. Our international network of institutions and individuals shares a mission to protect threatened scholars, promote academic freedom, and prevent attacks on higher education communities around the world.

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