SCHOLARS AT RISK NETWORK
VIRTUAL 2020 GLOBAL CONGRESS

REPORT

Truth
+ Power
Society

The Promise of Higher Education in Challenging Times

SPECIAL THANKS TO
Johns Hopkins University
American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)
SAR sponsors, members, partners, and virtual format speakers and participants
SAR began with a single good intention...

Dear [University] President,

I was reminded [yesterday] of how often university professors and students (and I suppose intellectuals more generally) become particular targets of human rights abuses. I thought too of the singularly important role that European refugees played in the intellectual development of our university in the 1930s and 1940s. Then I thought, with some regret, that there was little chance today of equally bright professors from Algeria or Kenya or East Timor or Bosnia or any other part of the world under intellectual or political threat finding their way to our campus. But I wonder if our university couldn’t do more to increase the chances of this happening? If one of our dearest cherished values is academic freedom, and if we also pride ourselves on being one of the world’s greatest universities, couldn’t we make it possible for professors-in-exile to come to teach here, at least temporarily, at least as a first place to catch their breath and think what to do next? This isn’t only utopian, is it? Wouldn’t it be nice of someday our university was known internationally as a place of intellectual refuge and sanctuary?

Email to the President of the University of Chicago, December 11, 1997, which sparked the creation of Scholars at Risk

JUNE 2000

Scholars at Risk is launched at the University of Chicago. By the fall the network consists of 41 member institutions, including two outside the US, and one academic association member.

2001

SAR assisted scholars from Bangladesh, China, and Russia.
The Scholars at Risk Network 2020 Global Congress, *Truth, Power and Society: The Promise of Higher Education in Challenging Times*, was a joint venture of Scholars at Risk (SAR), Johns Hopkins University, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the SAR United States Section.

The 2020 Global Congress marked SAR’s 20th year of service to the higher education community. Twenty years of hosting threatened colleagues. Twenty years of campaigning for those not free to join us. Twenty years of workshops, trainings, reports and events heralding the importance of academic freedom. Twenty years of standing up—together—for everyone’s freedom to think, question and share ideas.

Scholars—by profession and avocation truth-seekers—are under attack. Truth itself is under attack. The 2020 theme, *Truth, Power & Society*, recognized this, and pointed to the three core roles of higher education in responding to these attacks: **Truth**: research and teaching leading to new insights and understanding; **Power**: evidence-based contributions to public discourse and policy; and **Society**: meaningful engagement with the broadest public good.

How scholars, students, leaders and the public understand these roles goes to the heart of many incidents on campuses around the world, ranging from intimidation and harassment from outside campus, to violent protests by on-campus actors, to wrongful prosecutions, imprisonment and more.

The onset of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) supercharged these concerns. Medical professionals, researchers and scholars across disciplines have played a vital role in responding to the epidemiological, economic, political, and cultural dimensions of this crisis, as they will in the recovery and restoration of essential functions in our institutions and society. At the same time, deliberate interference with the dissemination of data, and intentional or negligent distortion of information delivered to the public and policy makers alike, have contributed to delayed and disorderly responses. We see attacks on scholars for sharing evidence-based research that contradicts official sources. We see growing pressures on scholars documenting gaps in response efforts. And we see authorities using the pandemic to mask crackdowns on free inquiry and free expression generally. Our work defending scholars matters now, perhaps more than ever.

Yet even as public health restrictions forced us to replace the in-person events with a virtual program, the 2020 Global Congress provided an especially poignant opportunity to discuss the importance of free and open university spaces. We thank all the speakers, panelists and 433 attendees from 44 countries who took part. We invite you to share this report and the videos of the Global Congress sessions, available on the SAR website (www.scholarsatrisk.org/bytype/2020-sar-global-congress-videos), within and outside your institution.

As we said in the opening session, our work and our network are about resilience. We exist to help colleagues and the higher education sector overcome pressures and threats. Our classrooms, laboratories and campuses sit empty, but SAR network members are stepping forward. They have extended the visits of scholars whose positions are ending. They are offering new positions—on campus and remote—to scholars still facing threats. They are hosting events as part of the newly virtual SAR Speaker Series, attending SAR webinars and online classes, hosting SAR Student Advocacy Seminars, and campaigning for imprisoned scholars, especially those at grave risk from the virus. Together, SAR members continue to make a difference.

We thank all of you for what you are doing, for being an important part of our resilience, and look forward to continuing our work together in the months and years to come.

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**2002**

SAR arranged 27 positions in 2002, for scholars from Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Cameroon, China, Colombia, Cote d’Ivoire, D.R. Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, Madagascar, Morocco, Pakistan, Palestine, Singapore, Spain, Swaziland (Eswatini), Ukraine, and Zimbabwe.
2020 CONGRESS SPEAKERS / PLENARIES

RON DANIELS
President, Johns Hopkins University
PLENARY | Thursday, March 26

Ronald J. Daniels is the 14th president of Johns Hopkins University. During his tenure, Daniels has focused his efforts on several key areas: strengthening interdisciplinary collaboration in research and education, enhancing student access, deepening engagement with the city of Baltimore, and supporting economic and social innovation.

Daniels’ focus on interdisciplinary collaboration has produced a series of transformative initiatives aimed at addressing some of society’s most commanding challenges, from realizing the promise of precision medicine to responding to the needs of 21st-century cities. With support from alumnus Michael Bloomberg, Daniels initiated the Bloomberg Distinguished Professors program to recruit 50 scholars from across the globe to hold joint appointments in two or more divisions of the university. Daniels also led the creation of several other ambitious, multidisciplinary initiatives, including the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Agora Institute, which aims to strengthen civic engagement and encourage robust dialogue among all citizens; the Henry A. Kissinger Center for Global Affairs; the William H. Miller Department of Philosophy; and the Bloomberg American Health Initiative.

Long a champion of reducing barriers to participation in higher education by students from diverse and lower socioeconomic backgrounds, Daniels committed the university to enhancing its financial aid program and becoming need-blind. A law and economics scholar, Daniels is the author or co-author of seven books and dozens of scholarly articles on the intersections of law, economics, development, and public policy in areas such as corporate and securities law, social and economic regulation, and the role of law and legal institutions in promoting third-world development. Daniels earned an LLM from Yale University in 1988 and a JD in 1986 from the University of Toronto. He received a BA from the University of Toronto in 1982, graduating with high distinction.

PAULA JOHNSON
President, Wellesley College
PLENARY | Friday, March 27

Paula A. Johnson is the 14th president of Wellesley College. She is an innovator recognized globally for advancing, promoting, and defending the education, health, and well-being of women. This critically important work is deeply informed by her broad range of experience as a path-breaking physician-scientist and educator who is an expert in health care, public health, and health policy.

President Johnson has dedicated her scientific and medical career to furthering our knowledge of the biological differences between women and men. She has led the way in ensuring that research findings are effectively translated in order to improve health care for women and has used her voice to effect important changes in policy so that sex differences are included in research. By uncovering gender biases in these arenas and advancing science, she has helped transform how medicine is practiced and how research is conducted, touching the lives of countless women.

Before coming to Wellesley, President Johnson founded and served as the inaugural executive director of the Connors Center for Women’s Health and Gender Biology and was chief of the Division of Women’s Health, both at Brigham and Women’s Hospital.

A cardiologist, President Johnson was also the Grayce A. Young Family Professor of Medicine in Women’s Health at Harvard Medical School, a professorship named in honor of her mother, and a professor of epidemiology at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

President Johnson attended Harvard and Radcliffe colleges, received her A.B., M.D., and M.P.H. degrees from Harvard, and trained in internal medicine and cardiovascular medicine at Brigham and Women’s Hospital. She was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York.

Jonathan Cole
In conversation with Ron Daniels

Jonathan R. Cole is John Mitchell Mason Professor of the University and former Provost and Dean of Faculties at Columbia University. His scholarly work and publications focused on the sociology of science as a research specialty and more recently on issues in higher education, particularly problems facing American research universities. His most recent book, Toward A More Perfect University (Public Affairs, 2016) follows his earlier publication The Great American University: Its Rise to Preeminence, Its Indispensable National Role, Why It Must Be Protected (Public Affairs, 2011). He also co-edited Who’s Afraid of Academic Freedom? (Columbia University Press, 2015).

Hahrie Han
In conversation with Paula Johnson

Hahrie Han is the Inaugural Director of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Agora Institute and Professor of Political Science at Johns Hopkins University. Before joining JHU, she was a Professor of Political Science and Environmental Politics at the University of California, Santa Barbara. From 2005–2015, she was an Associate Professor of Political Science at Wellesley College and a Robert Wood Johnson Health Policy Scholar at Harvard University from 2009–2011. She specializes in the study of civic and political participation, collective action, organizing, and social change. Her most recent book is How Organizations Develop Activists: Civic Associations and Leadership in the 21st Century (Oxford University Press 2014).

2003

The SAR offices relocate to New York University, where it is housed within the Provost’s Office.

2005

Scholars at Risk and Cara organized the Cara/SAR UK Universities Network, the first of many SAR sections and partner networks. Total network membership grew to over 100 institutions, and SAR arranged the 100th position for an at-risk scholar.
Laurel Leff is an Associate Professor of Journalism at Northeastern University and the associate director of Northeastern’s Jewish Studies Program. She teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in news writing, media law, nonfiction writing, and America and the Holocaust. Leff was formerly a reporter for The Wall Street Journal and the Miami Herald and an editor with American Lawyer Media Inc. and the Hartford Courant.

Leff’s most recent book, Well Worth Saving, is a harrowing account of the profoundly consequential decisions American universities made about refugee scholars from Nazi-dominated Europe. The United States’ role in saving Europe’s intellectual elite from the Nazis is often told as a tale of triumph, which in many ways it was. America welcomed Albert Einstein and Enrico Fermi, Hannah Arendt and Herbert Marcuse, Rudolf Carnap and Richard Courant, among hundreds of other physicists, philosophers, mathematicians, historians, chemists, and linguists who transformed the American academy. Yet for every scholar who survived and thrived, many, many more did not. To be hired by an American university, a refugee scholar had to be world-class and well connected, not too old and not too young, not too right and not too left and, most important, not too Jewish. Those who were unable to flee were left to face the horrors of the Holocaust. In her rigorously researched book, Laurel Leff rescues from obscurity scholars who were deemed “not worth saving” and tells the riveting, full story of the hiring decisions universities made during the Nazi era.

Leff has a master’s in the study of law from Yale University and a master’s in communications from the University of Miami. She received an A.B. from Princeton University with a major in the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs.
SAR arranges the 300th position for an at-risk scholar. SAR partners with UAF to organize the UAF-SAR Netherlands & Belgium Section, and with Universities Ireland to organize the SAR Ireland Section, which launched with keynote by Nobel Prize Laureate and SAR Ambassador Shirin Ebadi.
The SAR Norway section launched. SAR arranged the 400th position for an at-risk scholar, and the first SAR Courage to Think Award was presented to Aryeh Neier at SAR’s 10th anniversary Global Congress at NYU.

Academic Freedom Issues in Sub-Saharan Africa
- Dr. Noel Twagiramungu, Boston University
- Dr. Aschale Siyoum, Xavier University
- Satang Nabaneh, University of Washington School of Law
- Fraternel Amuri, University of Kisangani

Teaching Academic Freedom
- Dr. Robert Cole, Roger Williams University
- Dr. Laurens Lavrysen, Ghent University Human Rights Centre
- Federica Tagliavini, University of Trento

"Academic freedom includes more than the freedom of single professors to speak and write freely. It includes a broader role that academics play as leaders in a given society and the protection students need to pursue their education in a safe environment."

"We have a problem of integrity in the system. Academics, usually appointed by the state, are working to suppress academic freedom and accountability."

"Bringing these issues of academic freedom into the classroom at the micro-level, it is important...My experience has been that our students don’t understand academic freedom or the tenure and promotion system. [T]hey’re not always sure what they can demand of their professors."

"Soldiers have replaced historian scholars in teaching highly controversial, and sensitive historical trajectories."

"Academics include more than the freedom of single professors to speak and write freely. It includes a broader role that academics play as leaders in a given society and the protection students need to pursue their education in a safe environment."

2020 CONGRESS SPEAKERS / PANELS
FRIDAY, MARCH 27
RESCHEDULED EVENTS

SAR regrets that we were unable to include many planned in-person events in the virtual Global Congress, including the pre-Congress meetings, workshops and Global Congress sessions listed below. SAR hopes to reschedule many of these events in the coming months.

PRE-Congress

General Advocacy Workshop
Providing an opportunity for SAR members, national SAR sections and partners to learn about advocacy opportunities within the network, including Scholars in Prison, Student Advocacy Seminars and Legal Clinics, Teaching Academic Freedom, Academic Freedom Monitoring and more. (To be rescheduled.)

Student Advocacy Workshop
Providing training and networking opportunities for faculty and students participating in SAR Student Advocacy Seminars and Student Advocacy Day. (Virtual presentations and mock-meetings held in March – May 2020.)

Student Advocacy Day
Faculty and students participating in SAR Student Advocacy Seminars conduct visits to offices of US administration officials, elected representatives, and foreign embassies to advocate on behalf of imprisoned scholars and students around the world. (Virtual meetings with some officials held in March – May 2020.)

National Section Meetings
SAR members attending the Congress meet with other representatives from their national SAR section to share information and explore joint activities. (Rescheduled for various dates.)

International Advisory Committee (IAC) Meeting
Members of the IAC, made up of representatives of the various national SAR sections and partner networks, meet together with SAR leadership to discuss SAR network business and strategy. (Held online in May 2020.)

Scholar Workshop
SAR staff and guest experts meet with scholars assisted by SAR and other partner programs to share information aimed at speeding their personal and professional recovery, including sessions on making the most of a visit, job searches, securing funding, and managing stress during transitions. (To be rescheduled.)

How to Host Meeting
SAR staff and network members with experience hosting threatened scholars meet with current and prospective network members considering hosting scholars on their own campuses. (Content available from SAR’s “How to Host Handbook” and by consultation with SAR staff.)

SAR-NED Workshop on Support for HRDs/Practitioners at Risk
SAR and NED staff meet with affinity group members and others exploring growing on-campus opportunities, including temporary visits, for “practitioners at risk,” including journalists, lawyers, civic leaders, artists, writers, human rights defenders, democracy advocates or similar individuals. (To be rescheduled.)

CONGRESS

SAR develops activities aimed at promoting academic freedom, which evolve into SAR’s Academic Freedom Monitoring Project and Promoting Higher Education Values Project. In 2012, SAR Canada Section is launched.

Partner Voices
At Scholars at Risk, everything we do is with partners. The Global Congress celebrates the time, talent, creativity and commitment of the partners who make our collective work possible, including network member institutions, partner scholar-assistance programs, advocacy organizations, research partners, and funders. Each plenary session was to start with a short presentation by a representative SAR partner, emphasizing their essential role in helping the scholars we serve.

Courage to Think Dialogues
The scholars we serve never fail to inspire us with their intelligence, passion, courage and dedication to their scholarship and communities. The “Courage to Think” dialogues share this experience with Congress participants. They feature intimate, one-on-one conversations with scholars assisted by Scholars at Risk or a partner program. (To be rescheduled online.)

Activity Expo
The Global Congress was to include an activity expo featuring the programs and activities of Scholars at Risk, network members and partners. It would have provided participants the opportunity to meet, share experiences, and learn about activities in other parts of the network. (Content available from SAR’s monthly newsletter, emails and social media channels.)

Panel Sessions
The following additional panel sessions scheduled for the in-person event were not included in the virtual Global Congress due to issues with scheduling or speaker availability.
- Academic Freedom Issues in Asia
- Academic Freedom Issues in CEE & Russia
- Academic Freedom Issues in Latin America
- Gender & Academic Freedom
- Implementing Academic Freedom
- Support for Refugee & Threatened Scholars
The Scholars at Risk Courage to Think Award may be given to individuals or groups. These include those who have experienced threats personally, those who have worked to assist them, or those who work to promote a wider understanding of, and respect for, academic freedom and related values.

2020
Presentation of the 2020 Courage to Think Award was postponed along with other in-person Congress events. It will be presented in November 2020 at an event in New York City marking the release of the annual Free to Think report and the close of SAR’s 20th anniversary year.

2018
Academics for Peace
Barış İçin Akademisyenler
For extraordinary efforts in building academic solidarity and in promoting the principles of academic freedom, freedom of inquiry, and the peaceful exchange of ideas

2016
Over 600 wrongfully imprisoned scholars & students in Egypt
(Presented in absentia)

2014
Habib Kazdaghli
Dean of Manouba University, Tunisia, for defending his university from the violence that followed the Arab Spring

2011
Aryeh Neier
Former President of Open Society Foundations, for his career defending academic freedom and free expression

2015
SAR publishes the first Free to Think report, documenting 333 attacks on higher education communities in 65 countries. SAR arranged the 600th position for an at-risk scholar.

2016
SAR arranges the 700th position for an at-risk scholar. The SAR Germany and SAR Sweden sections launch. Total network membership grows to over 400 institutions.
SAR Finland and SAR Switzerland sections launch. Total network membership grows to over 500 institutions. SAR arranges the 900th position for an at-risk scholar.

2018

SAR United States and SAR Europe launch. SAR publishes Promoting Higher Education Values. “Dangerous Questions,” a free online course about academic freedom begins; it has since been taken by over 3,500 learners in 126 countries.
From a single good intention...

Scholars at Risk is a global network resolved to work together to make a difference.

We resolve that there should be established a permanent network of universities, colleges, and centers of research, study, and teaching...

[This network] should dedicate itself to protecting the fundamental human rights of scholars and [...] others engaged in the community of ideas.[...]

[This network] should devote its greatest energies to assisting scholars facing the most grave threats to their being and to their profession, [...] by providing positions of personal and professional sanctuary, [...] such as to assist scholars in resuming their careers.[...]

[This network] should in addition charge itself with raising respect for academic freedom, higher education, scholarship, and the free exchange of ideas; [...] advocacy in defense of academic freedom and the human rights of scholars. [T]his network should be known as "Scholars at Risk."

Excerpts from the resolution establishing the Scholars at Risk Network, June 7, 2000, University of Chicago

2019

SAR Denmark, SAR Italy and SAR Slovakia sections are launched. SAR marks its 20th anniversary and arranges the 1,400th position for an at-risk scholar.

2020

2020 SAR Global Congress held in virtual format with 433 participants from 44 countries.
LOOKING AHEAD  |  On November 18 – 20, 2020, SAR will mark the close of our 20th anniversary year with events in New York City and online, including the public release of the annual Free to Think report and presentation of the 2020 Courage to Think Award. Over the coming months SAR staff will be consulting with network members, national SAR sections and partners on the programming. We welcome suggestions and inquiries about “SAR November 2020” to scholarsatrisk@nyu.edu. Please mark your calendars and plan to join us to celebrate our work together.

“IT TAKES A CRISIS SOMETIMES FOR PEOPLE TO REALIZE THE INSTITUTIONS THAT MATTER.”

JHU PRESIDENT RONALD J. DANIELS  |  Opening Plenary, 2020 SAR Global Congress

GIVE TODAY

Scholars at Risk depends on the generous financial support of friends inside and outside higher education communities to sustain our work. Gifts of any size are appreciated, including gifts in honor or memory of others, matching gifts and legacies. To learn more, get involved, or make a gift to help sustain SAR’s work, please visit www.scholarsatrisk.org/give-today, or contact Starr Miller at starr.miller@nyu.edu or +1-212-998-2179.