



Permanent Mission of Finland
to the United Nations



Side Event

Freedom of Opinion and Expression and Academic Freedom

9:00-10:00 a.m. EST

22 October 2020

CONCEPT NOTE

Click [here](#) to join the webinar

Co-organizers:

- UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression
- Permanent Mission of Finland to the UN
- Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar to the UN
- Open Society Foundations' Education Program
- Scholars at Risk

Context

On 23 October 2020 the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly will consider the report on academic freedom presented by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

The report focuses on the ways in which the freedom of opinion and expression protect and promote academic freedom, and the special role played by academics and academic institutions in democratic society when assured of institutional autonomy and self-governance. Without academic freedom, societies lose their capacity for self-reflection, for knowledge generation and for a constant search for improvements of people's lives and social conditions.

Drawing on examples from all regions of the world, the report highlights the repression and harassment of scholars and students, unlawful restrictions on freedom of opinion and expression that interfere with research, teaching, debate and discussion by the academic community in their institutions or in other fora, and various measures, from funding of research to hiring of professors and administrators, that are used to erode and attack the autonomy of academic institutions.

The report provides clear guidance on the scope of academic freedom, recognizing that it is protected by a wide range of human rights norms and principles, including the right to freedom of opinion and expression. It encourages individuals and organizations to articulate their claims as violations of academic freedom, and concludes with a set of recommendations to States, academic institutions and civil society.

The side event is aimed at discussing how the report's findings and recommendations can be used to ensure the realization of the freedom of opinion and expression to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers as an integral aspect of academic freedom ,

and enhance the ability of academics and institutions to contribute to democracy and development around the world.

Objectives

This side event will provide a forum to discuss the challenges to academic freedom, including social harassment and political repression of scholars, students, and institutions around the globe, as well as legal protections offered by international human rights law, including in particular the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and how the report's analysis and recommendations can be used to protect the freedom of opinion and expression aspects of academic freedom worldwide.

Modalities

The one-hour moderated discussion will have the following format:

Opening remarks:

H.E. Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif Al-Thani
Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations

H.E. Juan Ramon de la Fuente (tbc)
Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations

Ms. Irene Khan, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression

Presentation of the main findings and recommendations of the report

Prof. David Kaye, former Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression

Panel discussion:

- Ms. Camilla Croso, Director of the Education Program of the Open Society Foundations, will highlight the role of academic freedom and its importance in advancing open and democratic societies
- Dr. Maleiha Malik, Executive Director, Protection of Education in Insecurity and Conflict, Education Above All Foundation, will discuss the particular challenges to academic freedom in countries affected by conflict
- Mr. Robert Quinn, founding Executive Director of the Scholars at Risk Network, will describe some current legal challenges and responses to pressures on academic freedom around the world

Concluding remarks:

- Ms. Irene Khan, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression

BIOGRAPHIES



Camilla Crosso
Director of the Education Program, Open Society Foundations

Camilla Crosso is the Director of the Education Program at the Open Society Foundations. She has worked in promoting the right to education at national, regional, and global levels for over twenty years. Prior to joining Open Society Foundations, she coordinated the Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE) and served as the President of the Global Campaign for Education between 2010 and 2018. In her earlier years, she worked for the Brazilian non-governmental organization Ação Educativa and for the Kellogg Foundation's regional Latin American office in São Paulo.

Camilla holds an MSc from the London School of Economics (LSE) in Social Policy and Planning in Developing Countries and is currently undergoing her PhD studies in Education Policy at the State University of Campinas, Brazil. Her academic publications relate especially to education financing, non-discrimination, the right to education and the right to social participation and democratic governance. She integrated both the regional and global SDG4/ Education 2030 Steering Committees, as well as the Board of the Global Partnership for Education, having played an active role in SDG4 negotiations and final approval.



David Kaye - clinical professor of law at the University of California, Irvine, and the former United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression

David Kaye is a clinical professor of law at the University of California, Irvine, and the former United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression (2014-2020). His 2019 book, *Speech Police: The Global Struggle to Govern the Internet* (Columbia Global Reports), explores the ways in which companies, governments and activists struggle to define the rules for online expression.

Appointed by the UN Human Rights Council in June 2014, David served through July 2020 as the global body's principal monitor for freedom of expression issues worldwide. He reported to the UN on COVID-19 and freedom of expression and, in 2019, to the UN General Assembly on online hate speech. His earlier reporting addressed, among other topics, the ways in which Artificial Intelligence technologies implicate human rights issues, the global private surveillance industry and its impact on freedom of expression, growing repression of freedom of expression globally, encryption and anonymity as promoters of freedom of expression, the protection of whistleblowers and journalistic sources, the roles and responsibilities of private Internet companies, and the regulation of online content by social media and search companies. He conducted official missions to Japan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Mexico, Liberia, Ecuador and Ethiopia, and regularly addressed major policy and academic conferences dealing with free expression, technology and media freedom worldwide. Together with the regional monitors of freedom of expression in Europe (OSCE), the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, he joined six Joint Declarations on major contemporary challenges for free expression and independent media worldwide.

After doing his undergraduate and graduate work at the University of California, Berkeley, he joined the U.S. State Department as a lawyer in 1995. In 2002, while the principal lawyer for international humanitarian law at the State Department, he was an advocate inside government for application of

the Geneva Conventions to detainees captured by U.S. forces in Afghanistan, which the United States had invaded in the wake of the attacks of September 11, 2001, or otherwise brought to the U.S. Naval detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. In addition to his work on human rights and freedom of expression, his academic research and writing have focused on accountability for serious human rights abuses, international humanitarian law, and the international law governing use of force. A member of the Council on Foreign Relations and former member of the Executive Council of the American Society of International Law, he has also published essays in such publications as Foreign Affairs, The New York Times, The Guardian, Reuters, Slate, Foreign Policy, JustSecurity and The Los Angeles Times.



Irene Khan
United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression

Irene Khan is the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression since 1 August 2020. She is the first woman to hold this position since the establishment of the mandate in 1993.

An internationally recognized advocate for human rights, gender equality and social justice, she teaches at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, and is co-author of *The Unheard Truth: Poverty and Human Rights*, which has been published in seven languages.

Ms. Khan was Secretary General of Amnesty International from 2001 to 2009. Under her leadership, Amnesty strengthened its work on political and civil rights, especially in the context of counter-terrorism and armed conflicts, while also expanding its mandate to include economic, social and cultural rights. The first woman to head Amnesty International, she launched its first global campaign to stop violence against women and girls.

From 2012 to 2019, Ms. Khan headed the International Development Law Organization (IDLO), the only intergovernmental organization exclusively devoted to the rule of law and sustainable development. In that capacity she co-convened the UN Conference in Preparation of the Review of SDG 16 in 2019, the High Level Group on Justice for Women in 2018 and the Conference on Rule of Law in Africa in 2016. She expanded programs on access to justice and championed Sustainable Development Goal 16 on peace, justice, access to information and effective institutions.

As Consulting Editor of *The Daily Star* in Bangladesh from 2010 to 2011, Ms. Khan covered human rights, democracy and gender issues and supported independent media. She was Visiting Professor at the State University of New York Law School in 2011 and Chancellor of Salford University in the UK from 2009 to 2015.

She began her professional career with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, working for 21 years at headquarters and in various country operations, including Chief of Mission in India and Deputy Director, Division of International Protection.

Ms. Khan collaborates with the Columbia Global Freedom of Expression program, including as a member of the Jury of the Global Freedom of Expression Awards. She was a member of the World Bank Gender Advisory Council, the UNAIDS High Level Panel on HIV Prevention and Human Rights, and the UN Global Compact Advisory Council. She sits on the governing boards of the Overseas Development Institute (UK), BRAC (Bangladesh) and Barefoot Law (Uganda).

Ms. Khan has received several awards, including the Sydney Peace Prize in 2006, for her contribution to human rights. Born in Bangladesh, she studied at Manchester University and Harvard Law School.



Maleiha Malik

Executive Director, Protection of Education in Insecurity and Conflict, Education Above All Foundation

Maleiha Malik is a technical law expert who steers the Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict programme of Education Above All Foundation



Robert Quinn

Founding Executive Director of the Scholars at Risk Network

Robert Quinn is the founding Executive Director of the Scholars at Risk Network, an independent not-for-profit corporation based at New York University.

Mr. Quinn formerly served as a member of the Council of the Magna Charta Observatory, based in Bologna, Italy; Executive Director of the Institute of International Education's Scholar Rescue Fund; on the Steering Committee of the Network for Education and Academic Rights (NEAR), based in London, UK; a member of the Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility of the American Association for the Advancement of Science; a member of the Scientific Committee of Pax Academica, an online journal on academic freedom in Africa published by CODESRIA from Dakar, Senegal; a fellow with the Woodrow Wilson Visiting Fellows Program in Washington, DC. He received an A.B. cum laude from Princeton in 1988, a J.D. cum laude from Fordham in 1994, and an honorary doctorate from Illinois Wesleyan University in 2010. In 2012, Mr. Quinn and Scholars at Risk received the University of Oslo's human rights award, the Lisl and Leo Eitingger Prize, for "relentless work to protect the human rights of academics and for having inspired and engaged others to stress the importance of academic freedom."