### Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive Director's Message</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Network</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAR Sections, Partners &amp; Hubs</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosts 2020–2021</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholars Hosted</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research &amp; Learning</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAR Europe</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporters</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stats &amp; Financials</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give Today</td>
<td>BACK</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“HOW CAN I HELP?” Over the past year, this simple question has been asked thousands of times by members of higher education communities around the world. In those few words, they are not only expressing concern for threatened scholars, students, and activists—they are also echoing the call that launched our network.

Over the past few months, many were asking about colleagues in Afghanistan. For the better part of twenty years, they have fought for a new, forward-looking, knowledge-based Afghanistan. Many hundreds of them traveled abroad to seek an education, and returned to their homeland, dedicated to openness and tolerance. These are not the values of the Taliban, so their lives are now at risk. We are grateful to the many Scholars at Risk members and partners around the world who are working with us to offer assistance to as many Afghan colleagues as possible.

Others have asked the same question—“How can we help?”—about colleagues in Yemen, Myanmar, Belarus, Hong Kong, and a host of other countries where authoritarian, dictatorial, and illiberal governments have been actively working to restrict academic freedom. These governments target scholars and students, censor teaching and scholarship, and punish critical dissent because they fear what the university in its fullest sense represents: freedom to think, question, and share ideas.

Our network was launched to respond to such threats, and this year especially we have seen an extraordinary outpouring of support from people wanting to make a difference, people who truly believe that academic freedom is one of our most cherished values. This support has been extraordinary, but not surprising, as we have come to expect extraordinary kindness and efforts from the campuses, administrators, staff, faculties, and individuals who have voluntarily joined in our network and collective mission.

The challenges we faced this year are many, and ongoing, but our network was built for these challenges. Our founding charter set out to establish: “a permanent network of universities, colleges, and centers of research, study, and teaching...dedicated to protecting the fundamental human rights of scholars and others engaged in the community of ideas; ...to assisting scholars facing the most grave threats to their being and to their profession; ...and to raising respect for academic freedom, higher education, scholarship, and the free exchange of ideas.” Many thanks to each of our member institutions, to our funding partners, and supporters, without whom that permanent network—our network—would not exist.

I am pleased to share with you a summary of the incredible work that we have accomplished together over this past year, and look forward to doing even more together in the years ahead.

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

The climate in which SAR fulfills its mission is increasingly difficult, placing growing demands on our services. Populist and authoritarian regimes on the rise are actively working to restrict academic freedom, while ongoing refugee crises, armed conflicts, and climate disasters contribute to record numbers of scholars seeking help, with over 800 requests under review or receiving services.

The higher education community is responding. Our global network has grown to include:

- **560+ universities**, colleges, and associations in 42+ countries
- **14 national sections**, with several more forming
- **14 partner networks** with leading higher education networks that help extend the reach of SAR activities to every region of the world

This means more opportunities to help scholars, raise awareness, and demand greater protection for universities, scholars, students, and academic freedom.
SAR Sections, Partners & Hubs

The SAR network is increasingly organized into national sections—geographic groupings of higher education institutions organized for the specific purpose of participating in SAR-related activities.

These are joined by partner networks—formal associations between SAR and pre-existing networks of higher education institutions. All of these are represented through SAR’s International Advisory Committee (IAC), which is the voice of the network membership to SAR’s governing board. 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.

Most recently, these have been joined by regional advocacy “hubs” in Africa and the Americas, made up of researchers and academic staff collaborating on projects aimed at increasing awareness and protection of academic freedom.

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)
International Association of La Salle Universities (IALU)
Magna Charta Observatory
Open Society University Network (OSUN)
SAR Australia
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
swissuniversities
UAF-SAR Netherlands and Belgium
Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe (UNICA)
My country Colombia is going through a very difficult time, stuck in a historical and complex internal conflict. Abuse of power by the current government is an ongoing risk for academics and academic activities, especially in the public sphere. The financing of education has fallen dramatically, and with the pandemic we have regressed in terms of social indicators. I fear we will not be able to recover soon.

In spite of these fears, SAR has allowed me—from the safety of my host country—to continue my academic and activist work in Colombia, keeping me safe, secure, and alive. My host university does not interfere in my work or my schedule and since I am able to work autonomously, I can focus and decide the timing and activities I want to take on, as well as the work products that I hope to generate during my stay here. My work matters because it is linked to many people, networks, and groups and contributes to the defense of human rights and especially, to improving the lives of women and sexual dissidents.

For those academics who find themselves in similar situations, I would urge you to contact SAR and similar networks and present your case. Do it quickly, share the information and consult possible outlets with international organizations that can work with SAR. The anguish and despair that one feels when one is at risk or threatened can be paralyzing. You have to keep moving and seek support, and SAR can help to provide this support as well as other options and resources.

I will never forget when I arrived at my host campus during one of the worst winters of the last 25 years, in the middle of the pandemic, alone, away from my family, my home, and everything I love most. SAR reached out to me and was concerned for my well being and for how I was adapting to another city, another language, and another world. That single communication, that single call was so important to me. My tutor said, “the most important thing is that—you are alive and you are safe. Now to recover. And please, do not lose the joy.”
The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is still struggling to adopt democratic principles. In recent decades, leaders have stepped up actions that undermine freedom in an attempt to muzzle the opposition and avoid prosecution for crimes in which they are directly or indirectly involved. Academics are not spared in these actions. They are targeted by the authorities in an attempt to silence them or to stifle investigations. My research on victims of the massacres in eastern DRC made me a target and required me to make a choice between abandoning my study and submitting to censorship, or disappearing.

“I arrived at this decision after several arrests by the intelligence services, searches of my residence, seizures and destruction of my manuscripts including phones, computers, and cameras used for data collection. There is no protection for researchers in the DRC, and I was no exception. My fellow academic colleagues and academic authorities were even called upon to hunt me down. The growing threats were unsettling and I was ultimately forced to go underground. Because of this, I often had to resort to the use of other researchers to help with the data collection for my study, the results of which I was unable to publish.

Thanks to SAR and its partners University of Québec at Montreal (UQAM) and McGill University, I found a reason to smile again. Today, I work peacefully in Canada and my work is published in international journals. To my fellow academics who find themselves in situations similar to mine, I urge you to stand strong, to know that there is life after experiencing such hardships and threats, and to join the SAR network.

I can never forget the commitment, empathy, sacrifice, generosity, and effort provided by Scholars At Risk, and through SAR, UQAM, and McGill University. I owe my continued development to these institutions.

“To my fellow academics who find themselves in situations similar to mine, I urge you to stand strong, to know that there is life after experiencing such hardships and threats.”
SAR’s core protection work provides direct assistance to threatened scholars, including arranging temporary research and teaching positions at SAR member institutions, advising on careers and transitions, 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 1,053 new applications, including a high volume of applications from Afghanistan. SAR currently handles a caseload of over 1,500 scholars seeking assistance. This year, the top five countries for scholars requesting assistance were Afghanistan, Turkey, Yemen, Myanmar and Ethiopia. The top five reported types of threats were those related to arrest/imprisonment, insecurity/conflict, wrongful dismissal, harassment, and killings/violence/disappearances.

**Higher Education Communities 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 315 scholars this year, including arranging 147 positions. These positions represent over US $6.3 million contributed by host campuses and partners that directly supports at-risk scholars and their families. Since SAR’s inception in 2000, our network has helped over 1,600 scholars and created over 1,500 positions at 300 host campuses, representing over US $32 million of support for colleagues under threat.

**Other Services**
Beyond arranging positions, SAR provides scholars with advice, legal referrals, career advisement, and other services, and has provided these to 259 scholars this year and over 1,800 in our history. SAR staff lead training workshops for scholars and hosts, with over 500 participants in the last five years. 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 54 emergency grants to scholars for in-country needs; travel for interviews, conferences, or to take up new positions; visa fees; legal costs; family support for those detained or facing charges; or supplemental support to address challenges presented by the pandemic and related travel restrictions. SAR also provides support to public intellectuals, activists, writers, artists, and other “practitioners at risk” who suffer attacks or restrictions because of their work defending free inquiry, free expression, human rights, and democratic values.
As a member of and advocate for the Baha’i community in Iran, I was deprived of higher education by the Islamic Revolution. The Intelligence Protection Organization (IPO) of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps arrested me because of my social activism in disadvantaged areas in my city, Shiraz. They accused and imprisoned me as a Baha’i activist.

I continued to pursue academic study and research opportunities. I finished my PhD in Women’s Studies at the University of Pune and returned to Iran, hoping to find an academic position in my field or with a non-governmental organization focused on empowering women, educating children, and national social welfare. At first, Tehran University accepted my application, but then I was informed that because I am Baha’i, I could not work with Iranian universities or other educational institutions.

Being subjected to deprivation, persecution, and exclusion from social and economic life has been extremely painful, but I have never given up. I have tried to find a way to share my knowledge, research, and experiences with those who might benefit from them. I have done so by writing articles in various national and international publications, through presentations at conferences, and through my work with various organizations that seek to promote education, peace, and justice.

I am deeply grateful to SAR for opening doors when I needed help, for aiding in my integration into the academic world at University of Oslo—my host university—and for assisting me in understanding how the academic world works.

“Being subjected to deprivation, persecution, and exclusion from social and economic life has been extremely painful, but I have never given up.”

After spending four years in solitary confinement, I left Iran for India where
SAR is grateful to the universities that have created positions for scholars throughout our history, and especially those listed below who created positions last year. The list includes positions that commenced last year, remote positions, positions arranged that will be taken up shortly, as well as positions offered which have not yet been commenced due to arrest, travel restrictions, visa denials, COVID-19 or other travel restrictions, visa denials, or other external factors.

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
Bard College Berlin
Carleton University
Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne EPFL
European University Viadrina
Fern Universität
Forum Transregionale Studien
Freie Universität Berlin
Georgetown University
GFZ-German Research Centre for Geosciences
Ghent University
Goethe University Frankfurt
Heidelberg University
Helmut Schmidt-Universität
Humboldt University of Berlin
Jagiellonian University
Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz
Justus Liebig University Giessen
Karlsruhe Institute of Technology
King’s College London
KU Leuven
Kulturwissenschaftliche Institut Essen
Leibniz Universität Hannover
Leipzig University
Linnaeus University
Lund University
Malmo University
Max Planck Institute for Human Development
McGill University
Norwegian University of Science & Technology
Oslo Metropolitan University
Philips-Universität Marburg
Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt
Radboud University Nijmegen
Roger Williams University
Ruhr University Bochum
RWTH Aachen University
Sapienza University of Rome
Scuola Normale Superiore
Simon Fraser University
Swedish Defence University
Technische Hochschule Lübeck
Technische Universität Berlin
Technische Universität Darmstadt
Technische Universität Dresden
Technische Universität München
Ulm University
Université Libre de Bruxelles
University of Agder
University of Bergen
University of Bern
University of Bremen
University of British Columbia
University of California, Riverside
University of Cologne
University of Connecticut
University of Copenhagen
University of Duisburg-Essen
University of Florida
University of Gothenburg
University of Göttingen
University of Greifswald
University of Hamburg
University of Hohenheim
University of Kassel
University of Lausanne
University of Missouri
University of Oslo
University of Pittsburgh
University of Portsmouth
University of Potdam
University of Sheffield
University of Stuttgart
University of Trento
University of Tromso
University of Vienna
Uppsala University
Utrecht University
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
Western Norway University of Applied Sciences
Whitman College
Xavier University of Louisiana
York University
Virginia Commonwealth University
Virginia Tech
Vrije Universiteit Brussel
Wageningen University
Wellesley College
Western Cape South Africa
Western Norway University of Applied Sciences
Western University
Whitman College
Windsor University
Yale University
York University

Scholars Hosted

During the 2020–2021 academic year, host campuses and other partners created positions for the scholars listed below by their discipline and country. The list includes positions commenced that year, positions arranged that will be taken up shortly, as well as positions offered which have not yet been commenced due to arrest, travel restrictions, visa denials, COVID-19 or other travel restrictions, visa denials, or other external factors.

Arts & Humanities (22)
Ancient History, Egypt (Syria)
Archeology (Syria)
Comparative History (Turkey)
Comparative Modernist Literature (Turkey)
Design History & Theory (Turkey)
Education (Turkey)
Education, Human Rights (Pakistan)
French Linguistics & Discourse Analysis (Cameroon)
History (Tajikistan)
History (Turkey)
History (Turkey)
Information & Communication Sciences, Arts & Theater (Cameroon)
Kurdish Literature (Turkey)
Language & Linguistics (Syria)
Linguistics (Cameroon)
Linguistics, Semitic Languages (Syria)
Agricultural Sciences (Syria)
Agricultural Sciences, Plant Pathology (Syria)
Analytical Chemistry (Pakistan)
Aquatic Entomology & Biotechnology (Yemen)
Architecture, Engineering (Turkey)
Biochemistry (Turkey)
Biochemistry (Yemen)
Biological Sciences & Biotechnology (Yemen)
Civic Engineering (Hydraulics) (Turkey)
Computational Physics (Turkey)
Electrical & Electronic Engineering (Turkey)
Electrical Engineering (Algeria)
Electrical Engineering (Turkey)
Environment & Sanitation Sciences (Burundi)
Environmental Engineering (Syria)
Geology (Syria)
Mechanical Engineering (Syria)
Mechanical Engineering (Turkey)
Medicinal Chemistry (Turkey)
Metallurgical & Materials Engineering (Turkey)
Nuclear Reactor Physics (Yemen)
Organic Chemistry (Turkey)
Pharmacogenomics (Cameroon)
Pharmacology (Occupied Palestinian Territory)
Physics (Turkey)
Physics (Cameroon)
Physics (Turkey)
Physics (Turkey)
Social Sciences (50)
Anthropology (Iraq)
Anthropology (Turkey)
Anthropology of Migration (Afghanistan)
Communication Science (Turkey)
Communications (Iran)
Criminal Justice (Turkey)
Criminology (Turkey)
Development Studies, Women & Gender Development (Bangladesh)
Economics (Turkey)
Economics, Development (Turkey)
Educational Sciences (Turkey)
Ethnology (Turkey)
Gender studies (Iran)
Geography (Yemen)
Government & Political Science (Egypt)
Human Geography (Syria)
International & Comparative Education (Yemen)
International Political Economy (Tanzania)
International Relations (Libya)
International Relations, Defense & Strategic Studies (Iran)
Linguistics (Turkey)
Near Eastern Studies (Turkey)
Peace and Conflict Studies (DR Congo)
Philosophy (Turkey)
Philosophy (Turkey)
Philosophy (Turkey)
Political Science (Egypt)
Political Science (Pakistan)
Political Science & International Relations (Turkey)
Political Science & Public Administration (Turkey)
Political Science & Public Administration (Turkey)
Political Science, Management Agendas (Turkey)
Psychological Counseling (Turkey)
Psychology (Turkey)
Public Administration (Turkey)
Radio, Television & Film (Turkey)
Science Education (Turkey)
Social & Cultural Anthropology (Turkey)
Social Psychology (Turkey)
Sociology (Turkey)
Sociology (Turkey)
Sociology (Turkey)
Sociology (Turkey)
Sociology (Turkey)
Sociology (Afghanistan)
Sociology (Belarus)
Sociology (Belarus)
Sociology (Brazil)
Sociology (Iran)
Sociology (Turkey)
Sociology & Social Anthropology (Turkey)

Business & Finance (6)
Business Administration (Turkey)
Economics (Syria)
Economics (Turkey)
Economics (Turkey)
Economics (Turkey)
International Business Administration (China)

Law & Human Rights (6)
Foreign & International Law (Turkey)
International Human Rights Law (Uganda)
Law (Turkey)
Law (Ethiopia)
Law (Maldives)
Public Law (Turkey)

Mathematics & Information Sciences (6)
Applied Mathematics (Turkey)
Mathematics (Turkey)
Mathematics (Turkey)
Mathematics & Knowledge Management Systems (Turkey)
Mathematics Education (Turkey)
Mathematics Education (Turkey)

Medicine & Public Health (13)
Anaesthesiaology & Reanimation (Turkey)
Clinical Microbiology & Infectious Diseases (Turkey)
Forensic Medicine (Turkey)
Gastroenterology (Turkey)
HIV/AIDS research (Afghanistan)
Internal Medicine (Turkey)
Medical Biochemistry & Public Health Management (Turkey)
Medical Genetics (Turkey)
Neuroscience (Myanmar (Burma))
Nutritional Sciences (Yemen)
Pediatric Cardiology (Turkey)
Psychiatry (Turkey)
Psychiatry (Turkey)

Physical & Life Sciences (31)
Agricultural Biotechnology (Turkey)
Agricultural Sciences (Iran)

Mathematical Sciences (Turkey)
Mathematics Education (Turkey)
Mathematics (Turkey)
Mathematics Education (Turkey)

Medical Sciences (Turkey)
Agricultural Sciences (Turkey)
Agricultural Sciences, Plant Pathology (Turkey)
Analytical Chemistry (Yemen)
Aquatic Entomology & Biotechnology (Iran)
Architecture, Engineering (Turkey)
Biochemistry (Turkey)
Biochemistry (Iran)
Biological Sciences & Biotechnology (Iran)
Civic Engineering (Hydraulics) (Turkey)
Computational Physics (Turkey)
Electrical & Electronic Engineering (Turkey)
Electrical Engineering (Algeria)
Electrical Engineering (Turkey)
Environment & Sanitation Sciences (Burundi)
Environmental Engineering (Syria)
Geology (Syria)
Mechanical Engineering (Syria)
Mechanical Engineering (Turkey)
Medical Genetics (Turkey)
Medical Genetics (Iran)
Medical Genetics (Iran)
Neuroscience (Myanmar (Burma))
Nutritional Sciences (Iran)
Pediatric Cardiology (Turkey)
Psychiatry (Turkey)
Psychiatry (Turkey)
SAR’s advocacy work increases protection for at-risk scholars by documenting the global phenomenon of attacks on higher education communities and seeking implementation of additional protections for academic freedom.

*Free to Think 2021*, the annual report of SAR’s Academic Freedom Monitoring Project, documents 332 attacks on university communities in 65 countries. Volunteer monitors throughout SAR’s global network contribute by submitting data and by supporting advocacy around the report. Since 2011, SAR has documented 2,060 incidents involving 2,732 attacks on higher education in 122 countries. 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. Over the last six years, students in 37 SAR clinics helped prepare academic freedom reports on Bahrain, Belarus, Colombia, Côte d’Ivoire, Ethiopia, Hungary, Iran, Israel, Thailand, Turkey, and Venezuela for submission to national and international human rights bodies.

Together with partners in the regions, SAR has helped launch academic freedom advocacy hubs in West Africa and in the Americas. These seek to cultivate regional collaboration on advocacy in support of issues relating to academic freedom and protecting scholars, students, and institutions from attack.

With funds granted in 2021, the Americas hub—led by University of Monterrey, Mexico; University of Ottawa, Canada; and SAR—will raise awareness, build a sustainable network of experts at institutions throughout the hemisphere, and generate regional advocacy. As part of its initial work, the hub has been invited by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) to help develop regional networks and standards on academic freedom.

*Free to Think 2021* This year’s report 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 features more than a dozen profiles of countries where SAR reported more than five incidents of attacks on higher education communities within the reporting year, including Afghanistan, Belarus, China, Hong Kong, Myanmar, and the United States.
Students

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 scholars and students identified by SAR’s Scholars in Prison Project. Over the last seven years, students at 40 institutions in Bangladesh, Canada, Germany, Ghana, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States helped SAR campaign for 20 imprisoned scholars and students from Bahrain, Belarus, China, Egypt, India, Iran, Nicaragua, Saudi Arabia, South Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates. Over that same period, SAR has seen the release or improvement in conditions of detention for the subjects of student advocacy campaigns from Iran, Nicaragua, Saudi Arabia, and South Sudan.

Seminar participants put their advocacy skills into practice at SAR’s annual Student Advocacy Day. This year’s virtual Student Advocacy Day webinars featured training on avenues for government advocacy in the US and Europe, social media advocacy, the power of the student voice, and testimony from formerly imprisoned scholars and family members of imprisoned scholars. The webinars drew over 250 students from across the seminar program. In past years, more than 100 students and faculty met in person to exchange best practices in advocating for imprisoned scholars, discuss advocacy strategies with guest experts, and meet with elected officials. In early 2022, Student Advocacy Day sessions tailored to national and regional contexts will take place virtually and in hybrid format in Canada, Europe, and the United States.

Key Actions

This year student actions have included social media campaigns, meetings with representatives in government, and virtual events, including:

> **The publication a book of poetry**, written in prison by wrongfully detained Professor G. N. Saibaba in India. Students at University of California, San Diego and University of California, Santa Barbara co-organized this effort, held a virtual book launch in June, and sent copies of the book to the Embassy and consulates of India to the United States.

> **Creative awareness-raising** by Ruhr-Universität Bochum students, who added to a botanical garden a plaque explaining the plight of imprisoned conservationist Niloufar Bayani and scientist Ahmadreza Djalali.

> **An article by students** at University of Padua raising awareness about the wrongful imprisonment of Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali and Patrick George Zaki.

> **A petition to the Canadian Parliament**, organized by University of British Columbia students, requesting that Parliament call for the release of Professor Ilham Tohti, an imprisoned Uyghur scholar.

> **A motion tabled before UK Parliament**—following outreach by University of Dundee students—in support of Patrick George Zaki, a University of Bologna student imprisoned in Egypt.
> **Multiple media articles** as a result of student outreach and awareness campaigns by University of Pittsburgh, University of Nottingham, University of British Columbia, and Roger Williams University students (Pittsburgh City Paper on Rahile Dawut, Impact Nottingham on G. N. Saibaba, The Ubyssey on Ilham Tohti, The Hawks’ Herald on several imprisoned scholars).

> **Multiple events**, including Mansfield University’s Student Showcase Conference, Muhlenberg College’s Week of Action, among others.

> **Multiple social media and visual campaigns**, including a video on the arrest and wrongful imprisonment of Patrick George Zaki by University of Oslo students.

This fall, in addition to the regular student efforts to raise awareness about imprisoned scholars, students in SAR Student Advocacy Seminars and Legal Clinics at University of British Columbia in Canada, and Yale Law School in the United States, are conducting research on visa and migration pathways for Afghan scholars.

**Scholars in Prison**

**Key Actions**

> **SAR arranged for former Scholar-in-Prison Peter Biar Ajak** to speak at an event on critical hope organized by SAR member University of British Columbia, in Canada, in July. SAR and several Student Advocacy Seminars campaigned for Peter when he was wrongfully imprisoned for one and a half years. Peter spoke about his experience as a peace activist in South Sudan.

> **In July, SAR organized and issued a joint statement** in support of Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali, calling on the European Union, European state governments, and the United States government to secure his release. SAR sections and partners participated in this effort, including over social media. The joint letter was covered in Läkartidningen and Research Professional News.

> **SAR issued a joint statement calling for the release of jailed Bahraini academic**, blogger, and human rights defender Dr. Abduljalil Alsingace, who has been on hunger strike to protest ill treatment and demand the return of a book he wrote in prison which was confiscated by prison authorities.

> **On August 9, SAR sent a letter to Iranian authorities** raising concern for the well-being of Niloufar Bayani, an imprisoned researcher and conservationist, who had just tested positive with COVID-19.

Since August, as part of a SAR-wide effort in support of scholars facing threats in Afghanistan, SAR has conducted outreach to US Members of Congress, the US Department of State, and relevant United States government staff around evacuation options, lists of scholars seeking help, and protection on the ground for scholars seeking to depart. SAR’s letter, signed by over 150 higher education institutions, associations, networks, and over 3,500 professionals
and students concerned about colleagues in Afghanistan, urged the United States government to take immediate action to help save Afghanistan's scholars, students, and civil society actors. SAR continues to seek United States government action to create/facilitate migration pathways for Afghan scholars and students.

SAR Europe led a complementary effort in Europe—joined by higher education associations, networks, and leaders in the field of scholar protection—seeking funding and pathways of support for researchers at risk from Afghanistan. As part of a SAR-wide effort in support of scholars facing threats in Afghanistan, SAR Europe organized an appeal to European governments and EU institutions urging them to make necessary adjustments to entry/exit policies to facilitate relocation and pressing for a dedicated EU fellowship scheme and other dedicated funding streams. SAR also joined an NGO appeal to UN Member States to ensure the adoption of a resolution creating an investigative mechanism on Afghanistan at the 48th session of the UN Human Rights Council.

**Courage to Think Award**

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, and respect for academic freedom and related values.

Established in 2011 in recognition of SAR’s 10th anniversary, previous awards have been given to Aryeh Neier (United States), Habib Kazdaghli (Tunisia, 2014), “over 600 wrongfully imprisoned scholars and students in Egypt” (2016), Barış İçin Akademisyenler (Academics for Peace) (Turkey, 2018), and Rahile Dawut (China, 2020).

Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali, a prominent scholar of disaster medicine, is the recipient of SAR’s Courage to Think Award for 2021. Together with the international higher education and human rights communities, SAR recognizes Dr. Djalali’s contributions to his field, his impact on communities affected by crisis, and his continued struggle for freedom.

On December 9th, Dr. Djalali’s wife, Vida Mehrannia, will accept the award on his behalf at SAR’s virtual symposium, “Free to Think 2021.”
As a scholar of gender and sexuality, I research and work in the field of contemporary archaeology. My work is considered to be pioneering within the Middle East.

Unfortunately my research has been severely affected by political tensions and an authoritative political atmosphere which has strongly undermined the independence of academia. Iranian academia is under the control of the conservative dominant party, which rejects pluralism in scientific approaches—especially in the humanities and social sciences. This has led to a drastic decline in international academic collaboration and is detrimental to the vitality of academia.

As an independent female scholar, I have been oppressed and targeted due to my research, gender, and my pursuit of academic freedom. Prior to working with SAR, I applied for more than 30 positions and each time was rejected. The final time, the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology falsely claimed that I was unqualified.

Despite my efforts I have been denied the right to work in academia and conduct my research. Because I have openly discussed the compulsory hijab and refused to cooperate with right-wing organizations, the authorities have marked my research as improper and have prevented me from progressing within my field. I was certain I would not be able to continue an academic career in my country. For some time, I refrained from contacting SAR because I wanted to give this opportunity to colleagues from the more unstable countries whose lives were at risk. But I recognized that, on a personal level, it was a painful experience to accept that I had no chance of continuing my work in my homeland. SAR has created a powerful, worldwide network that plays an important role in helping to connect scholars to academia and, more importantly, helping to amplify our voices. SAR has helped to support me in finding a place within my field and allowed me to consider my role as an engaged scholar.

Scholars around the world confront great threats and increased instability due to growing fundamentalism and the rise of authoritarian regimes. SAR has provided those of us with the opportunity to continue our academic careers. It is still a hope that academia and engaged scholarship can inspire nations and actively participate in the peaceful transformation of the region.
Religious authoritarianism has deeply affected my career as an academic. My teaching and academic research explore religious and societal values that the authoritarian conservative mindset in Jordan, my home country, deems untouchable. Hence, I have been accused of blasphemy by students, colleagues, and the broader local community. The accusations have escalated on social media. Consequently, for over six years, I have been subjected to harassment, intimidation, threats of violence and prosecution, censorship, and disciplinary actions, which ultimately led to the loss of my academic position.

“Scholars should never waive their right to academic freedom despite potential dangers. Their resilience and determination will contribute to fostering a culture of critical thinking which is seminal to the development of human civilization.”

As I was unable to pursue my academic career in my home country, SAR thankfully offered me the opportunity to pursue my work abroad. They have offered a healthy and friendly academic environment where I am able to broach new professional and cultural territories. It is absolutely essential that organizations like SAR exist to protect scholars from the grave threats they are exposed to. From my point of view, what SAR has done for me is a sort of “academic resurrection.”

Authoritarian antagonism towards academia is not a novel phenomenon, but has been there since the days of Socrates. However, scholars should never waive their right to academic freedom despite potential dangers. Their resilience and determination will contribute to fostering a culture of critical thinking which is seminal to the development of human civilization. Certainly, this is not an easy task, but it is not impossible.
SAR’s research and learning work aims to increase security for scholars and universities by strengthening collective 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 groups. SAR promotes these publications as tools for academic freedom education through trainings, workshops, seminars, and university courses.

From April through June 2021, SAR developed and offered a five-part virtual discussion series called *Lines, Line-Drawing, and Consequences* that drew on the values publications and examined archetypal incidents that regularly challenge academic freedom on university campuses. The interactive series brought together 85 participants and offered tools for assessing incidents in real-time and developing pro-values responses for their higher education communities.

Building on these publications, SAR and partners at the University of Oslo 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 5,000 participants from 140+ countries, reflecting the international demand for information about academic freedom.

In April, SAR hosted a virtual event with partners to promote the use of the Academic Freedom Index (AFi) as an instrument to inform research and drive human rights policy debates among government officials, parliamentarians, research funders, university administrators, academics, students, and advocates alike. The event, *Free Universities: Putting the Academic Freedom Index Into Action Through the UN Human Rights Systems*, featured the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of freedom of opinion and expression and a member of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR).
Like many academics from Turkey, I found myself at risk after signing the petition titled, “We Will not be Party to This Crime.” This petition severely criticized the government’s policy of accelerating violence in Kurdish towns. In the summer of 2015, following the end of the peace negotiations, urban clashes began occurring in Kurdish towns, and the governors of dozens of cities and districts declared curfews. These curfews lasted months and the people in these areas could not leave; they could not access water and food. As a result of the military operations under the curfews, more than two thousand people lost their lives, among them many civilians. The towns and districts were destroyed and people living in these places were displaced.

All of this, as one may expect, created many human tragedies. I signed the petition while I was near completion of field research for my dissertation in Diyarbakir. As the political center of the Kurdish movement, it was one of the main conflict areas. Besides being a signatory, due to increased pressures towards Kurds and scholars working on the Kurdish political movement, I was forced to leave my research site in January 2016, shortening my time in the field. After completing my dissertation and obtaining my doctorate degree in 2019, I was discouraged from securing employment in Turkey because my scholarly work focuses on the Kurdish movement. In Turkey, pursuing an academic position or publishing scholarly research is not possible for me because the authoritarian regime does not allow the study of Kurds or Kurdish politics. The Scholars at Risk Network helped me to connect with academic institutions abroad that had positions relevant to my studies.

I will never forget the day I was in a hostel room in Rome—my Italian visa expired, but my German visa was still in process. It was the Easter holiday during the pandemic, Italy had intensified travel restrictions, and all of the shops and restaurants were closed. I was worried about whether my visa would come through, but also about maintaining my accommodation. It was at that moment I received an email from my SAR contact, who told me that SAR would be able to support me. This provided an enormous boost of support and in that moment, I felt that I was not alone, but a member of a solidarity network. Since contacting SAR, my experience has been wonderful. I have been welcomed at each of the universities where I have held positions, and they were just the right fit for my academic background.
In 2016, I was a PhD student in economics and had been working as a research assistant in Turkey for eight years. In January of that year, as a member of the Academics for Peace Initiative and as a human rights defender advocating for justice, I was part of a group of 1,128 signatories of a petition calling for peace and an end to violence in the southeast region of Turkey.

Since then, and due in part to the topic of my thesis, I found myself subject to several investigations and lawsuits by university and state authorities on alleged charges of terrorism. At first, my doctoral studies were blocked. This led to the subsequent loss of my university position by government decree. Among other restrictions, I was barred from continued studies and future employment in Turkey. With no opportunities, I was forced to leave the country to continue my academic studies in Germany.

SAR has helped me so much in continuing my academic life, by helping me document my situation, organizing events, and in many other ways. Thanks to SAR and my host university, I have been able to continue my academic studies. I will never forget SAR’s and Potsdam University’s support.

“In SAR has helped me so much in continuing my academic life, by helping me document my situation, organizing events, and in many other ways.”
SAR Europe promotes SAR’s mission in Europe, seeking to strengthen European policymaking on academic freedom and improve support for at-risk scholars in all parts of Europe.

In 2020, SAR Europe convened a European Coordinating Committee for Academic Freedom Advocacy, which has grown to include 28 members in 19 countries. With input from committee members, SAR Europe contributed policy briefings and submissions to the Council of Europe, the European Research Area, the European Parliament, and the European Commission, with a view to informing Europe’s legal and policy norms as they relate to academic freedom. Together with SAR sections in Europe, SAR Europe also advocated towards national and European authorities on behalf of scholars in prison and to raise concern for scholars and academic freedom in Belarus, Turkey, Poland, Hungary, Egypt, Iran, and Afghanistan.

SAR Europe, which is based at Maynooth University, Ireland, also coordinates the EU-funded Inspireurope project, a 10-partner initiative to strengthen support in Europe for researchers at risk. In November 2020, Inspireurope published *Researchers at Risk: Mapping Europe’s Response*, mapping the support measures available to researchers at risk in Europe, as well as gaps and opportunities for future support. In September 2021, the project published *Researchers at Risk: National-Level Actions in Europe*, gathering the experiences of 14 national-level initiatives in Europe to support at-risk scholars, including 12 SAR sections. The Inspireurope project also ran webinars and trainings for 370 researchers at risk in Europe and 406 prospective and current employers, and held a high-level forum gathering over 600 participants.
SAR is grateful for the generosity of our supporters with special thanks to the Office of the Provost of 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 have otherwise provided assistance or advice.

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List from Sept. 2020 - Sept. 2021
Stats & Financials

560+ Network Institutions
14 Partner Networks
14 National Sections
42+ Countries

$6.3M in Scholar Support
83 Host Institutions
315 Scholars Helped
147 Positions Arranged

FY21 Summary

Total Revenue $2,662,253
Total Expenses $2,085,245
Protection $1,230,937
Advocacy $682,293
Research & Learning $45,103
Development & Admin $126,912
Leveraged for At-Risk Scholars $6,362,404
(Return on protection costs)

Sources of Support

Members 34%
Grants 56%
Individuals 10%

Scholars at Risk is an independent not-for-profit corporation, hosted at New York University.
The growing risks associated with authoritarianism have profoundly affected the way I work with my research associates in Uganda, as freedom of information and access are increasingly limited. It is difficult to gather information, unless in close contact with trusted stakeholders. My research relates mostly to the work of not-for-profit organizations. Unfortunately, there has been growing and continuous pushback by the Ugandan state against such organizations as they are perceived as agents of foreign powers in the West.

"In spite of the challenges presented by an authoritarian government and with the support of SAR and my host university, today I am able to continue my work freely and safely."

Through SAR and my host university, I have developed important connections with key stakeholders and colleagues across the globe and within academia. This has helped me to navigate some of the risks associated with my work, as well as identify and address any gaps in my research. I have also acquired the necessary software to collect and store my data and information in a secure manner, which has been crucial in allowing me to continue my research.

SAR has also aided in helping me navigate these challenges by providing advisory services, academic freedom reports, and a network that has connected me to other researchers at risk. As a result, I am able to continue my important academic work and move forward on the trajectory of my research career. In spite of the challenges presented by an authoritarian government and with the support of SAR and my host university, today I am able to continue my work freely and safely.

To other academics in similar situations, I would advise them to build networks across the globe in order to develop pathways for their research. They could also benefit from participating in short courses, in order to develop more skills and knowledge that are essential for regional and international research projects.
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List from Sept. 2020–Sept. 2021
“I will never forget when I arrived at my host campus during one of the worst winters of the last 25 years, in the middle of the pandemic, alone, away from my family, my home, and everything I love most. SAR reached out to me and was concerned for my well-being and for how I was adapting to another city, another language, and another world. That single communication, that single call was so important to me.”

SARA HERNANDEZ
SAR-assisted scholar
The image above is a graphic recording created by Tiaré Jung during Dr. Saladdin Amhed’s presentation, “A Dialogue on Space and Inclusion in Higher Education” at the Centre for Comparative Muslim Studies as part of the SAR/Vivian G. Prins Speaker Series.

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