SCHOLARS AT RISK NETWORK
protection advocacy learning

20 YEARS

Defending the human rights of scholars and protecting academic freedom worldwide

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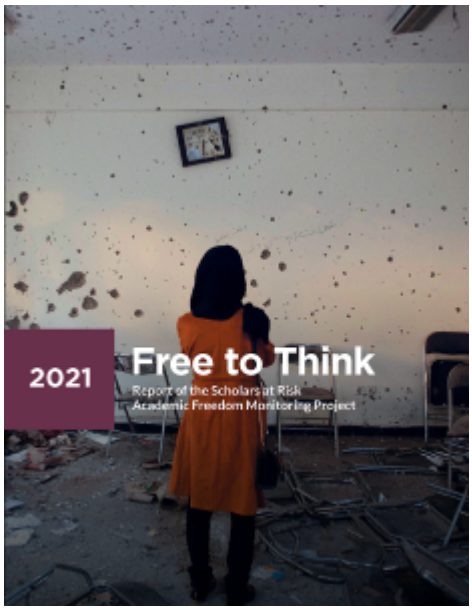
Free to Think 2021 report launch



On December 9, Scholars at Risk released *Free to Think 2021*, the seventh installment of an annual report by the Academic Freedom Monitoring Project. The report analyzes 332 attacks on higher education communities in 65 countries between September 1, 2020 and August 31, 2021, and urges governments, higher education leaders, and civil society to safeguard academic freedom and reverse the global phenomenon of attacks on scholars, students, and their institutions.

The report discusses regional pressures on higher education around the globe, including profiles of Afghanistan, where the Taliban now threatens to undo 20 years of higher education progress; Belarus, where higher education and government officials suspended, fired, and otherwise disciplined faculty and students for their peaceful expression; Myanmar, where soldiers and police used violent and often lethal force against students and faculty protesting a military coup; and the United States, where state legislatures advanced and passed bills seeking to ban areas of academic discussion.

Readers are encouraged to access and share translations of content from this year's report, including a section on "Academic Freedom and Its Protection Under International Law" (translated into Arabic, Chinese, French, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish) and regional profiles highlighting attacks on higher education in Belarus (Russian), Brazil (Portuguese), and Turkey (Turkish). A Burmese translation of the Myanmar profile is forthcoming.

Read the report »

Thank you to the SAR community

SAR's Annual Report is now available online to highlight the network-wide efforts to protect scholars and promote academic freedom. The report includes reflections from SAR-assisted scholars and provides an overview of the work that, together, our SAR Network has accomplished in each of SAR's three program areas: protection, advocacy, and research and learning. In celebration of our ever-growing partnerships around the world, we also invite you to view our video, "A Single Good Intention," and hear the inspiring words of a few of the many scholars across the network.

Together, we helped a record 315 scholars this year, including 147 visiting positions, and trained over 5,000 participants to defend academic freedom. These positions represent over USD $6.3 million contributed by host campuses and partners that directly supports at-risk scholars and their families. Since SAR's inception in June 2000, our network has helped over 1,600 scholars and created over 1,500 positions at 300 host campuses, representing over USD $32 million of support for colleagues under threat. Your support makes this important work possible.

As we reflect on our collective successes, we also embark on our end of year campaign and ask you to please join us by making your gift today! Whether you're an academic, student, professional, or interested friend, now is the time to renew your support or make a first-time donation to SAR. We are so grateful to our SAR community and we extend our deepest thanks for your support which makes this work possible.

SAR network support for Afghan scholars

Scores of institutions across the SAR network have leveraged a remarkable range of resources to invite Afghan scholars and practitioners to their campuses. As of this week, SAR members in the United States, Canada, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, Belgium, and Germany have extended offers to 20 scholars from Afghanistan. (These are in addition to continued support for scholars around the world, including offers to scholars from Turkey, Iran, Colombia, Palestine, and Syria this year.) While the visa and exit situation has been uncertain for many months, and remains very challenging, there are signs of good news: Afghan scholars have arrived to positions in Switzerland, Canada, and the US, and for scholars coming to the US, J-1 visa interviews are

beginning to be scheduled in Pakistan.

The need remains, however, with dozens of applications logged each week. If you are seeking to host a scholar or civil society leader from Afghanistan, you may view candidates currently seeking placement here, with SAR staff available to answer questions at scholarsatrisk@nyu.edu.

Scholars Seeking Hosts

SAR scholars are at-risk higher education professionals who 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.

A Scholar of Analytical and Pharmaceutical Chemistry from Turkey

This scholar specializes in analytical and pharmaceutical chemistry. She has over ten years of teaching and research experience engaging with Turkish academic institutions and a US-based university on topics of analytical and pharmacological chemistry, drug analysis techniques, and analytical method validation. An active researcher, she has authored several

A Scholar of Agricultural Studies from Yemen

This scholar of agricultural science specializes in plant breeding, nuclear-induced mutation techniques, and wheat, barley, and sorghum crop improvements. He is an experienced and active researcher with an extensive publication record. In his recent work, he developed two mutations of bread wheat that are resistant to rust diseases and identified drought-tolerant wheat genotypes by using carbon

A Scholar of Computer Science from Yemen

This scholar of computer science specializes in the internet of things, web ontologies, social tagging, and folksonomies. In his dissertation, he developed a semantic domain ontology from social tagging systems and offered a solution to tag ambiguity. He has a robust publication record, several years of teaching and research experience, and has instructed courses in artificial intelligence, machine and deep

publications in the field of chemistry, focusing her work primarily on quantity analysis in pharmacological preparations. She reports loss of position, risk of arrest, and prosecution in Turkey following the July 2016 coup attempt and seeks research opportunities in the Netherlands beginning immediately. (Turkey 1732)

isotope discrimination. His references highly praise his contributions to crop improvement, noting the impact his work has had on “poor farmer families by enhancing the sustainable cereal production and natural resources in rural areas of Yemen.” He reports facing threats due to the occupation of his university by armed forces and the ongoing conflict in Yemen, and seeks teaching and/or research opportunities in a safe country beginning immediately. (Yemen 573) (Yemen 640)

learning, C++, data structure, and web development, among others. He hopes to further expand his work in the use of artificial intelligence in health care. He reports facing threats due to the occupation of his university by armed forces and the ongoing, situational violence in Yemen, and seeks teaching and/or research opportunities in a safe country beginning immediately. (Yemen 627)

All Scholars Seeking Assistance »

SAR launches new Flanders section

SCHOLARS AT RISK
FLANDERS SECTION

The Scholars at Risk Flanders Section was launched on International Human Rights Day 2021. The section is coordinated by the Flemish Interuniversity Council, VLIR, and includes the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, KU Leuven, Universiteit Gent, Universiteit Antwerpen, and Hasselt University. Prime Minister of Flanders Jan Jambon has awarded a subsidy of 205,000 euros to VLIR, which will enable the universities to increase their hosting capacity for the coming academic year. At a time of increasing need for support for at-risk scholars and academic freedom, SAR warmly welcomes and celebrates the new partnership with VLIR and its members.

Contribute to an EC publication

The European Commission has launched a public consultation concerning SLAPPs, Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation. The deadline for submissions is 10 January 2021. SLAPPs have a chilling effect on academic freedom and public discourse by targeting those who speak out on issues of public interest. Researchers, scholars, and scientists increasingly find themselves in the crosshairs of strategic lawsuits that purposefully tie targeted parties into litigation and discourage contribution to public discourse. SAR is encouraging wide participation in this consultation. SAR Europe is a member of the Coalition Against SLAPPS in Europe which is calling on the European Union to adopt an EU Anti-SLAPP Directive to stop SLAPPs against scholars, journalists, and other members of civil society. Please access the online consultation or contact sareurope@mu.ie for more information.

Free to Think & Courage to Think Award

On Thursday, December 9th, Scholars at Risk (SAR) presented the 2021 Courage to Think Award and the Free to Think 2021 report at its Free to Think 2021 virtual symposium. The event featured sessions on threats to academic freedom in Myanmar, Afghanistan, Belarus, and the United States.

SAR awarded the Courage to Think Award to Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali, a Swedish-Iranian scholar of disaster medicine sentenced to death in Iran. The award, presented in absentia, recognizes Dr. Djalali's "courage, dedication to his academic profession, and continuing struggle for freedom."

Vida Mehrannia, Dr. Djalali's wife, accepted the award on his behalf and spoke of his arrest in 2016 while attending academic workshops in Iran. She called on the European Union and Sweden to take action on behalf of Dr. Djalali. "As we speak, Ahmadreza has been detained for over 2,050 days," Mehrannia said. "He is paying this

price of his life because of his deepest commitment to humanity, freedom, and acting against terrorism and a dictator regime."

See the symposium agenda and all session recordings »

Funding scheme granted to SAR Sweden

The Swedish agency Formas has committed 6 MSEK over three years to SAR Sweden for the hosting of SAR scholars researching sustainable development at Swedish higher education institutions. This is the second agency to issue a grant to SAR Sweden, following support from Riksbankens Jubileumsfond for researchers within the humanities and social sciences. "The funding from Formas is a valuable contribution to the Swedish research community," says Karolina Catoni, chair of SAR Sweden. "It will co-fund another 8-9 SAR-scholars and also broaden the scholarly disciplines of scholars hosted in Sweden."

News & Events

Supporting students and scholars at risk: efforts and good practices of UNICA and CIVIS universities I Dec 15, 2021

On August 22, UNICA joined over 150 other international higher education associations in the SAR-led appeal to European Governments and EU Institutions to take action for Afghanistan's scholars, researchers, and civil society actors.

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UNICA and Sapienza University of Rome webinar "Supporting students and scholars at risk: efforts and good practices of UNICA and CIVIS universities" in cooperation with CIVIS I Dec 15, 2021

Representatives of UNICA members and of the CIVIS alliance, which adopted a welcoming policy for refugee and at-risk students and scholars, will share good practices for supporting students and scholars at risk. Denise Roche, Advocacy Manager at SAR

Europe, will give a keynote speech. This webinar aims to promote a vision in which everybody has the right to access university education and research.

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Reimagining Academic Freedom – Open Society University Network Global Observatory on Academic Freedom First Bi-Annual Conference I Jan 20, 2021

The GOAF First Bi-Annual Conference will launch the work of the Global Observatory on Academic Freedom. The conference will present the findings of the Annual Report 2020/2021 and accompanying papers, liaise with the academic community – researchers in the field, as well as relevant policy makers and students.

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Inspireurope Webinar: Research Careers Outside Academia I November 29th, 2021

The Inspireurope project will host a webinar for researchers at risk interested in pursuing careers outside academia. More information and registration information forthcoming.

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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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