Network Reflection: Welcoming Ukrainian scientists in Brazil

“Paraná is a southern Brazilian state, home to 80% of the Ukrainian immigrants living in Brazil. Thus, it was not surprising that the start of the war in Ukraine in February 2022 touched deeply into the collective soul of the Paranaenses (the people of Paraná). Only three months later, the state’s government, through its funding agency for research and development, the Araucária Foundation, designed and launched a call entitled “Program for Welcoming Ukrainian Scientists,” aiming to fund initiatives to attract and welcome Ukrainian scholars to Paraná, Brazil. […] By July, our institution, the Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná (PUCPR), received the first Ukrainian researcher in Curitiba, the state’s capital. The arrival of Prof. Zhana Virna, originally from Volyn National University, Lutzk, resulted from an intense, collaborative initiative involving various academic and administrative departments to facilitate getting her and other scientists out of the conflict zone and into our safe space. […] According to Prof. Virna, who left a son and a granddaughter in Ukraine, “Any change for a person is always a stressful situation — to cross the long distance to Curitiba, on another continent — but the adaptation was easy. And all thanks to the good people, friendships, and kindness I felt.”
Prof. Virna joins more than 10 Ukrainians now in Brazil — and another 10 expected — with BRL $18,000,000.00 (~ USD $3,500,000.00) in support from the Brazilian Government.

Pr. Marcelo Távora Mira, Ph.D., Director for Internationalization, PUCPR
Pr. Vanessa Santos Sotomaior, Ph.D., Director for Research, PUCPR

Read the full piece to learn how PUCPR is supporting Ukrainian scholars in Brazil. Read more »

PUCPR will also host the Coalition for Academic Freedom in the Americas (CAFA) 2nd Regional Conference from November 9 - 10, 2023.

Are you a SAR Network member interested in writing a Network Reflection? We would love to hear from you. Please email us at scholarsatrisk@nyu.edu with the subject line “Network Reflection.”

Introducing MSCA4Ukraine awardees

The EU-funded MSCA4Ukraine scheme for displaced researchers from Ukraine published the first video of a five-part series showcasing the impact of the program. The video features 10 MSCA4Ukraine awardees speaking about their backgrounds, fields of research, and work before being awarded an MSCA4Ukraine fellowship. The series highlights the diverse range of researchers and research projects funded by the scheme. Watch it here »

Rob Quinn accepts honorary doctorate from VUB
On June 1, 2023, SAR Executive Director Rob Quinn accepted an honorary doctorate from the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) in Brussels, Belgium in recognition of his and SAR's "efforts to defend the human rights of academics all over the world," and as “a source of inspiration for anyone who values academic freedom.”

In remarks on behalf of his fellow honorees, Quinn urged that “at times when democratic practices of evidence-based inquiry and discourse are under threat, the university has a first-order responsibility to defend them." Quinn also participated in a public panel organized by the SAR Flanders Section and the Flemish Inter-University Council, during which he thanked the Flemish Ministry for providing EUR 200,000 in matching funds to help Flemish universities to host at-risk scholars.

Fellow awardees include mathematician Efim Zelmanov, lawyer Martti Koskenniemi, economist Marianna Mazzucato, and the Secretary-General of Amnesty International Agnès Callamard. SAR congratulates all and applauds VUB's commitment to protecting scientists at risk. |Photo credit: VUB/Thierry Geenen

Read Rob Quinn's full remarks »

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 hosting@SAR@nyu.edu.

A Scholar of Education and Psychology

This scholar of education and psychology has a decade of teaching and research experience at universities in Afghanistan, most recently as the head of a psychology department. She also has experience working as a counselor for students. She holds a master's degree in education and is currently writing her PhD thesis on educational guidance and counseling. This scholar faces risk due to her women's rights activism in Afghanistan. She is seeking a teaching or research position in a safe location beginning immediately. (Afghanistan-1783)
An Environmental Defender & Researcher
This environmental defender and researcher holds an MA in landscape studies and has several years of experience working at NGOs and universities, most recently as a regional director of an environmental protection organization. She has published her research on sustainable landscape management in peer-reviewed journals and is interested in conducting research on the role of women in agricultural development. She is seeking a research position in North America or Australia beginning in January 2024 and is eligible for co-funding through SAR’s Practitioners at Risk program. (Afghanistan-2098)

A Scholar of Organic Chemistry
This scholar of organic and polymers chemistry specializes in the synthesis, mechanisms, and spectroscopy of polymers. As a senior scholar, he has over 15 years of lecturing, research, and administrative experience in his native Yemen and most recently in Egypt where he developed an extensive record of academic articles. He reports risk of physical insecurity and academic instability due to the ongoing conflict in Yemen and the continued deterioration of the Yemeni academic space, and seeks a research position in a safe location beginning immediately. (Yemen-552)

“Women Academics Face a Double-Edged Sword”
Dr. Atsede Aregay, featured in our May 2023 newsletter, shares additional insight into the protracted conflict’s impact on women academics in Ethiopia’s Tigray region.
“While Tigrayan academics are facing startling setbacks to their academic careers, women academics face a double-edged sword worsened by the conflict. Despite the improvement in gender equality at Ethiopian universities, the number of women participating in the academia is still very limited. According to recent studies, “women represent less than 10% of the available top-level leadership positions of the 46 [Ethiopian] public universities.

As a manifestation of horizontal segregation, women’s underrepresentation is more pronounced in STEM-related fields.” Some of the barriers women face in pursuing higher education and professional careers within the universities are inequitable participation and opportunity, lack of recognition of contributions, family responsibility, failure to establish strong networks, poor policy intervention, and absence of women in senior academics and leadership positions. In Tigray, the conflict has worsened the disproportionate ratio of women academics.”

Read the full-length piece for further insight into how the Ethiopian diaspora is counteracting this academic destabilization and how Dr. Aregay is re-establishing her career in Norway. Read more »

If interested in hosting scholars like Dr. Aregay on your campus, please contact us at hostingatSAR@nyu.edu.

In SAR’s ‘Network Reflections’ series, network members and SAR scholars share their first-person experiences, stories, and advice. Contributors develop their pieces in collaboration with the SAR team, and final reflections are edited for length and clarity and featured in SAR’s monthly newsletters. Note: views expressed are those of the author(s). They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of the SAR Network or its members.

SAR holds side event at the UNHRC

On July 11th, SAR and State Mission sponsors Uruguay, the European Union, Portugal, and France held “From Words to Action: Implementing Academic Freedom Under UN Human Rights Standards.”

The side event to the 53rd session of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) featured opening remarks by Mr. Eamon Gilmore, European Union Special Representative for Human Rights and Ms. Farida Shaheed, UN Special Rapporteur for the Right to Education. A panel discussion followed
with Ms. Shaheed; Mr. Mikel Mancisidor, Member, UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; Mr. Jesse Levine, SAR Senior Advocacy Officer; and Mr. Hector Ulloa, Outgoing President, Norwegian Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund (SAIH). Ambassador Álvaro Moerzinger Pagani, Permanent Representative of Uruguay to the United Nations in Geneva, offered closing remarks.

The event builds on the success of the Joint Statement on Academic Freedom delivered at the UNHRC Session in March this year, and recent progress in support of academic freedom from the UN special rapporteur on the protection and promotion of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and continued support from UNESCO. The discussion also introduced new guidance on implementing academic freedom, in the form of new Principles for Implementing the Right of Academic Freedom, available in all six UN languages. The principles were drafted by an international working group coordinated by SAR. Comments on the principles document are invited through the SAR website.

SAR staff and scholars gather for in-person retreat

From June 13-15, the SAR office in New York was full of energy with coffee-fueled staff exploring new ideas and persistent challenges during a multi-day staff retreat. This marked the first in-person full-staff gathering after three years of primarily remote work since the pandemic, bringing together all 29 staff from across the United States and Ireland.
Scholars and practitioners graciously joined the discussions to offer advice and reflections with the staff and members of the Board. Guests including Dr. Mulu Gebreyohannes, Dr. Shuchi Karim, and DJ Switch, and Dr. Ajmal Sabawoon (pictured above) described their work, the challenges at-risk scholars navigate in new academic contexts, and the critical importance of accessible resources – such as mental health services and career counseling – throughout a placement. SAR is grateful to all for their shared time and guidance.

Are you interested in learning more about SAR scholars and their work? Listen to Dr. Shuchi Karim describe her work on gender and sexuality in Bangladesh on episode 12 of SAR’s ‘Free to Think’ podcast with host SAR Executive Director Robert Quinn.

Luce Foundation support for SAR’s Afghanistan response

SAR is grateful to the Henry Luce Foundation for renewed support for SAR’s response to the Afghan crisis. Since the fall of Kabul in 2021, SAR and our partner organizations have raced to assist as many Afghan scholars and practitioners as possible.

With early support from Luce, SAR added staff to process the sharp increase in requests for help, streamlined application processes, built new networks, and learned to navigate visa and logistical obstacles in a dozen countries. SAR has helped arrange more than 67 positions for Afghan
scholars and practitioners to date. The new $200,000 grant from the Henry Luce Foundation will allow SAR to continue efforts for even more scholars and practitioners impacted by the ongoing crisis.

Support SAR today

Support human rights and stand in solidarity with at-risk scholars around the world. Your contribution helps promote their indispensable scholarship and allows us to advocate on their behalf, preserving everyone's right to think, question, and share ideas. Give today »

SELECT OPPORTUNITIES & RESOURCES
See a full list of scholar resources on SAR’s website

MERIT Regional Postdoctoral Fellowship Programme | Deadline: July 31st, 2023
MERIT is a regional postdoctoral fellowship programme coordinated by the Central Bohemian Innovation Center, Czech Republic. The first call for applicants is open now, offering 15 postdoc fellowships in the fields of Biotechnologies/Biomedicine, Laser technologies, Space technologies, Sustainable Energy/Materials, and Digitalisation/AI, and its related-disciplines. Read more »

EVENTS

Webinar Recording: Academic Freedom in Iran: How Ideology can Affect Science | June 28, 2023
This panel discussion, organized by the International Community of Iranian Academics, sheds light on the enduring struggle for academic freedom in Iran since the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979. Watch here »

SAR Partner Event: Certificate in Advancing the Role of Community Stakeholders in Refugee Integration, Guilford College, Greensboro, N.C. USA | Aug 11, 2023
This certificate will engage participants in learning about forced displacement and refugee resettlement, and the methods by which community members can support and participate in
refugee integration efforts while centering the agency and dignity of refugees as co-designers of those methods. The program will involve a three-day in-person learning from Aug. 11-13 on Guilford’s campus, and an online element from October 20-22.

Read more »

MEDIA

“Afghan scholar faces Taliban threats in pursuit of freedom,” Western University | July 3, 2023
Western News profiles Dr. Nasar Ahmad Shayan, a visiting researcher at Western University and SAR-assisted scholar.

Read more »

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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.

411 Lafayette Street, 3rd Floor, New York, NY 10003 USA
Tel: +1-212-998-2179

scholarsatrisk@nyu.edu
www.scholarsatrisk.org

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