

## Call for Applications: Regional Director and/or Host Institution to Develop and Support an Academic Freedom Coalition in Africa

[Scholars at Risk](#) invites applications from candidates for a Regional Director position and Host Institution role that will develop and lead a regional coalition that conducts activities aimed at promoting and strengthening academic freedom in Africa.

This call is open to (i) director and host candidates that partner on a combined/joint application, (ii) institutions or organizations applying independently to host the coalition and director, and (iii) qualified individuals interested in applying independently for the director role. Details on the director role, host institution role, and application process follow.

### Background

Academic freedom is the right of members of the academic community to discover, transmit, and question knowledge and ideas through research, teaching, learning, and discourse.<sup>1</sup> Academic freedom is fully and independently grounded in freedom of opinion and expression, the right to education, and the right to the benefits of science, and it has elements of freedom of association, freedom of movement, and other rights. Academic freedom is a pillar of strong, democratic societies and it is crucial to providing important scientific, economic, cultural, and social progress from which all society may benefit.

Too often, however, scholars, students, and their institutions face restrictions on their academic freedom or suffer attacks for their work, ideas, and even their role in society. Violence, wrongful arrest and prosecution, retaliatory dismissals and suspensions, and legislative and administrative actions that undermine academic freedom and the autonomy of higher education institutions are among the alarming threats to higher education communities today. In Africa, such threats have eroded the space for scholars and students to exercise their academic freedom and provide society the benefits of their work and ideas. Protecting academic freedom and safeguarding the space for everyone to share ideas requires a robust and coordinated regional response from members of the higher education and human rights communities.

**Scholars at Risk (SAR)** is an international network of higher education institutions and individuals dedicated to protecting at-risk scholars and promoting academic freedom. SAR staff and network members support at-risk scholars through temporary research and teaching opportunities; report

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<sup>1</sup> In his report to the United Nations, the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, David Kaye, described academic freedom as the right “to conduct activities involving the discovery and transmission of information and ideas, and to do so with the full protection of human rights law.” (See UN, Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, David Kaye. Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression. A/75/261. July 2020. Para. 8.)

#### SCHOLARS AT RISK

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attacks on higher education through the Academic Freedom Monitoring Project and *Free to Think* report series; conduct advocacy through national, regional, and international human rights systems; and convene stakeholders in higher education, government, and civil society to learn about, research, and discuss academic freedom and its importance.

SAR aims to support the development of regional coalitions, including in Africa, that conduct academic freedom activities, build community and solidarity around a unifying cause, and link up with other regional coalitions and networks in ways that bolster a stronger, global movement to promote academic freedom. Such coalitions would bring together individuals and institutions in higher education and human rights from the region—including longtime and newer academic freedom advocates—to collaborate and support each other in achieving common objectives relating to the protection and promotion of academic freedom.

As a partner, SAR will provide funding to a Host Institution to support the hiring of a Regional Director as well as coalition activities in the region, offer technical support and expertise, facilitate connections in and outside the region with fellow academic freedom advocates and experts, coordinate cross-regional and international academic freedom advocacy and activities, and support coalition partners in securing additional funding and resources.

## Requirements and Expectations of the Regional Director

The Regional Director role is an exciting opportunity for an **experienced, highly organized, strategy-oriented, and resourceful professional** interested in **leading academic freedom advocacy and promotion activities in Africa**.

The Regional Director's principal responsibility will be to organize the coalition, develop activities, and grow membership and visibility as the leading regional defender of academic freedom in Africa. The director will also represent the coalition in dialogues at the regional and international levels. SAR will consider applications from candidates interested in both full-time and part-time roles (this may be of particular interest to faculty who are interested in directing a coalition while continuing to do some academic work).

Qualified candidates will demonstrate experience in networking and coalition-building, program development, project management, troubleshooting, communications, administration, and fundraising. The Regional Director's **core responsibilities** will be to:

- Develop and execute—in collaboration with a regional advisory group,<sup>2</sup> the host institution, and SAR—a plan for organizing and **launching the coalition**, including by hosting planning meetings, recruiting founding institutional partners, drafting a coalition charter, and conceiving initial committees or working groups (e.g. membership/outreach, advocacy, events).

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<sup>2</sup> This would include higher education and human rights professionals in the region who have expressed interest in supporting and participating in a regional academic freedom coalition.

- Grow and mobilize the coalition's individual **membership and institutional partnerships**, including by identifying, recruiting, and cultivating local and regional advocates for and experts on academic freedom. Develop and manage newsletters, bulletins, email lists, social media, and other communications content, with the support of relevant coalition members and future support staff (as resources permit). Coordinate annual and routine meetings and events. Organize orientations and trainings for new coalition members (as needed).
- Conceive, support, and lead the planning, execution, and refinement of the coalition's **advocacy, research, and visibility activities**, in collaboration with relevant coalition members. Maintain internal and external coalition communications relating to programming, decision-making, and opportunities. Present on coalition activities at regional and international conferences, workshops, events. Cultivate press relations and respond to media inquiries.
- Manage budgeting, book-keeping, grant-reporting, and maintaining records. Develop in partnership with coalition members and SAR a **sustainability plan** aimed at securing long-term funding and other program resources.

Desirable **skills, experience, and attributes** for the director include:

- Graduate degree in a relevant field (e.g. social sciences, international relations, law, human rights, international or comparative higher education, etc.) or comparable experience;
- Commitment to supporting academic freedom/free expression, higher education, human rights; experience in human rights or higher education systems, policies, and movements strongly preferred;
- Strong organizational and project management skills with an ability to prioritize tasks and coordinate multiple projects and competing deadlines; a resourceful and creative approach to problem-solving;
- Strong skills in managing and planning budgets, and preparing financial reports; experience in grant-writing and developing funder relations preferred; ability to generate and present data to coalition steering committee members, funders, and SAR;
- Flexible and comfortable with ambiguity; ability to navigate evolving situations; sensitivity to diversity of communities and views;
- Excellent research, analytical, oral, and written communication and presentation skill;
- Professional written and spoken fluency in English required.

## Requirements and Expectations of the Host Institution

Hosting the coalition and Regional Director is an exciting opportunity to play a leading role in supporting academic freedom across the region.

The host institution will (i) receive and administer funds support coalition activities and development, the hiring of the Regional Director, and other administrative costs of hosting the coalition, and (ii) otherwise support or participate in coalition activities as warranted, including, for example, hosting coalition meetings, conferences, and events (online and/or in-person). Prospective host institutions should be legally registered and located in Africa and may include higher education institutions (university departments, centers, or institutes), higher education or academic associations or societies, or civil society organizations (e.g. human rights organizations), that can offer a supportive environment for the Regional Director and coalition activities.

**Please note:** institutions interested in hosting the coalition that do not yet have a Regional Director in mind are reminded and encouraged to apply independently. In this case, SAR will work with a host institution finalist to identify and hire a Regional Director.

Core **responsibilities and attributes** of the host institution include:

- **Committed to supporting academic freedom** and conduct and plan programming that complements or supports the work of the coalition (e.g. advocacy, research, trainings, capacity-building, etc.); a history of developing relationships or otherwise engaging with relevant human rights and/or higher education stakeholders is highly preferred;
- **Able and willing to hire and employ a Regional Director** and other support staff (as needed and as available resources permit; ability to hire international candidates may be preferable); offers desk space and consistent internet access; ideally, can provide access to meeting spaces for coalition meetings and events;
- **Hold, manage, and administer coalition funds;** process payments for domestic and international services or goods the coalition intends to purchase (e.g. translation and interpretation services, printed materials, travel, accommodations, meals, event space rentals, etc.); and
- **Has clear systems and policies, and a track record** for preventing and responding to corruption, conflicts of interest, discrimination, harassment, and other improper or illegal activities.

Principal **benefits** to the host institution include:

- **Demonstrating leadership in promoting academic freedom** in the region and internationally, with increasing visibility as coalition programming grows;
- **Direct access to coalition programming** for the host institution's faculty, staff, students, and community (as warranted); and
- **Multiplying impact of coalition programming** with current or future research, teaching or programming at the host institution (such as joint research activities, conferences, events, trainings, advocacy, etc.).

## How to apply

**Joint director/host applications:** SAR encourages candidates for the Regional Director and Host Institution roles to apply together in a combined submission. This includes director candidates who are currently working for the proposed host institution, as well as director candidates who are not currently employed by that institution. Individuals interested in part-time directorships are also encouraged to apply. Joint applicants should [use this form to apply and submit a single PDF document](#) (please use the filename convention “Africa Regional Director & Host - [Last Name, First Name of Director Candidate]”) including the following elements:

- A CV/resume from the Regional Director candidate, including contact information for at least two references;
- A cover letter from the Regional Director candidate explaining their interest in the position, relevant experience, and vision for how they will lead the coalition’s development and growth to protect and promote academic freedom in Africa; and
- A cover letter from the Host Institution candidate explaining the institution’s interest in hosting the coalition and Regional Director, the proposed hosting arrangement and terms, any relevant experience, complementary activities, or contributions which the host would make in support of the coalition’s objectives, and how the host may support the Regional Director’s fundraising efforts. (This letter should come from the primary institutional officer who would oversee any hosting arrangements and future activities.)

**Host institution applications:** Institutions that are interested in hosting and developing the coalition but that have not yet identified a director may apply independently. In this case, SAR may work with a Host Institution finalist to identify and hire a Regional Director. Host institutions (without a director candidate) should [use this form to apply and submit a single PDF document](#) (please use the filename convention “Africa Host Institution - [Name of Institution]”) including the following elements:

- Position and contact information for the primary institutional officer that would oversee a coalition hosting arrangement and future activities; and
- A cover letter from the primary institutional officer explaining the institution’s interest in hosting the coalition and regional director, proposed hosting arrangement/terms, vision and strategy for overseeing a regional coalition, any relevant experience, complementary activities, or contributions which the host would make in support of the coalition’s objectives, and how the host may support the Regional Director’s fundraising efforts.

**Director candidate applications:** Interested candidates for the director role who do not yet have a partnering host institution may still apply separately, in which case SAR may work with select finalists in either or both roles to reach a final director-host arrangement. Candidates for the Regional Director role (with or without a host institution) should [use this form to apply and submit a single PDF document](#) (please use the filename convention “Africa Regional Director - [Last Name, First Name]”) the below materials in a single PDF document:

- A CV/resume, including contact information for at least two references
- A cover letter explaining their interest in the position, relevant experience, and vision for the coalition's development and growth to protect and promote academic freedom in Africa; and
- A description of any proposed hosting institution(s) and terms (if applicable) and/or how you will work with SAR to identify and secure a hosting arrangement.

**Applications are due by October 4, 2023.**

**Candidates identified for first round interviews will be contacted on a rolling basis.**