

Call for Applications: Regional Director and/or Host Institution to Develop and Support a Southeast Asian Academic Freedom Coalition

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

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. **Please note that applications are due by October 15, 2023.**

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.¹ 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, respectively, and 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 we may all 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 are among the alarming threats to higher education communities today. In Southeast Asia, 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 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 attacks on higher education through the Academic Freedom Monitoring Project and *Free to Think*

¹ 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, A/75/261, July 2020, Para. 8.)

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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 Southeast Asia, 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 inside 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, inspiring, strategy-oriented, and resourceful professional** interested in **leading academic freedom advocacy and promotion activities in Southeast Asia**.

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 Southeast Asia. The director will also represent the coalition in dialogues at the regional and international levels.

Qualified candidates will demonstrate experience in higher education and human rights, 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,² the host institution, and SAR—a plan for organizing and **launching the coalition**, including by hosting strategy and planning meetings, recruiting founding individual members and institutional partners, drafting a coalition charter, and conceiving initial committees or working groups (e.g. membership/outreach, advocacy, events).
- Grow and mobilize the coalition's individual **membership and institutional partnerships**, including by identifying, recruiting, and cultivating local and regional advocates for and

² The advisory group will include higher education and human rights professionals in Southeast Asia who have expressed interest in supporting and participating in a regional academic freedom coalition.

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 other 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 cooperation with relevant coalition members. Facilitate programmatic collaborations with existing academic and civil society groups working on related issues, as well as with regional and national human rights and higher education institutions. 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 (doctoral degree desired, but not required) in a relevant field (e.g. social sciences, international relations, law, human rights, international or comparative higher education, political science, etc.) or comparable experience;
- Commitment to supporting academic freedom/free expression, higher education, human rights; experience in academia and familiarity with higher education systems, administration, policies, and decision-making; experience in regional and international human rights systems advocacy, movements, and relationship-building strongly preferred;
- Strong organizational and project management skills with an ability to prioritize tasks and coordinate multiple projects and competing deadlines; an entrepreneurial 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, comfortable with, and able to navigate evolving situations; sensitivity to a diversity of communities and views;
- Excellent research, analytical, oral, and written communication and presentation skills;
- Professional written and spoken fluency in English required; fluency in at least one other regional language preferable.

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 to support coalition activities and development, the hiring of the Regional Director, and 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 Southeast Asia 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, 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. Joint applicants should [use this form to apply and submit a single PDF document](#) (please use the filename convention “SEA 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 of 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 Southeast Asia; 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, and any relevant experience, complementary activities, or contributions which the host would make in support of the coalition’s objectives. (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 “SEA 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 explaining the institution’s interest in hosting the coalition and regional director, proposed hosting arrangement/terms, vision and strategy for developing and overseeing a regional coalition, and any relevant experience, complementary activities, or contributions which the host would make in support of the coalition’s objectives.

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 should [use this form to apply and submit a single PDF document](#) (please use

the filename convention "SEA Regional Director - [Last Name, First Name]") including the following elements:

- A CV/resume, including contact information for at least two references
- A cover letter explaining your interest in the position, relevant experience, and vision for how you will lead the coalition's development and growth to protect and promote academic freedom in Southeast Asia; 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.

Candidates are asked to submit their application materials by October 15, 2023. Candidates identified for first round interviews will be contacted on a rolling basis.