March 2024

Scholars at Risk is seeking nominations for the 2024 Courage to Think Award, which will be presented at the SAR 2024 Global Congress taking place in Vilnius, Lithuania from June 25-27, 2024, in partnership with the European Humanities University (EHU). Nominations will be reviewed on a rolling basis.

The Courage to Think Award recognizes individuals, groups, or institutions that have demonstrated an exemplary commitment to protecting scholars and promoting academic freedom, whether through their professional work, private or community service, often in the face of personal risk.

Read more about past recipients and submit a nomination on the SAR website.

SAR 2024 Global Congress – Register Now!
Registration is open to the SAR Network for the 2024 Global Congress from June 25-27, 2024 in partnership with the European Humanities University (EHU) in Vilnius, Lithuania. The theme, "Sustainable knowledge: Lessons from universities, scholars and students in exile," seeks to explore and capture the experience of current and prior generations of academic communities forced into exile by political unrest, repression, disaster and conflict.

The Global Congress is SAR's largest convening and held generally every 2-3 years. The event brings together network members and partners to learn, share experiences, build solidarity, and inform SAR's activities and agenda for the coming years.

SAR has extended the "early-bird" rate for registration to April 15th. SAR and EHU have also reserved blocks of rooms at recommended hotels for Congress participants to book – these reservation blocks will expire March 15th and April 1st. We strongly recommend booking hotels early, given demand may be high this June.

We hope you join us!

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 hostingatSAR@nyu.edu.

Scholar of Agriculture and Plant Science | Afghanistan-1173
Expertise: 15+ years of teaching, research, and university leadership experience; specializes in nutrient and fertilizer management, plant breeding, natural resource management, and fermentation technology
Reported risk: Fears targeting due to his previous work with the Afghan government and his identity as a member of an ethnic and religious minority group in Afghanistan
Seeking: Teaching and/or research position anywhere in the SAR network beginning immediately
Recognizing women scholars across the Network

This month, we reflect on the essential contributions of women scholars and students to the global higher education landscape. We acknowledge that many of these women have continued their work – with great courage – in the face of threats aimed at their research and teaching, human rights activism, and/or their identity. **We hope that in reading these stories, you find inspiration to share their work and promote opportunities for women worldwide whose vital academic contributions are threatened by violence and repression.**

In Herat, Afghanistan, Zahra Hakimi was a women’s reproductive healthcare provider who often worked in secret and at personal risk to provide treatment to survivors of sexual assault. Facing threats from the Taliban, Ms. Hakimi and her family relocated to Canada with support from the University of Ottawa. Since December 2022, the Taliban have banned higher education for women in Afghanistan. However, Ms. Hakimi’s daughter, now enrolled in school in Canada, says she hopes to become a dentist. [Listen to Ms. Hakimi describe her journey](https://email.everyaction.com/EmailMessage/PreviewMessage/ca40452d-53cb-ee11-85f9-002248223794) »
Marvi Sirmed is a renowned journalist and activist from Pakistan, and currently a visiting professor of human rights and media at the University of Connecticut through SAR’s Practitioners-at-Risk program. Ms. Sirmed “courageously reported on sensitive issues such as violence against women and ‘honor killings’ in Pakistan, despite facing significant opposition from powerful entities. Her unwavering dedication to shedding light on these atrocities led to numerous threats and even a harrowing assassination attempt.”

Last week, Ms. Sirmed gave a guest talk at Kent State University as part of a wider series of programming titled “Women: Voices of Leadership and Voices on the Margins.”

Read about Marvi Sirmed & her talk at Kent University »

Organize a SAR Speaker Series event on your campus »

Marfa Rabkova is a third-year student at the International Law and European Union Law program at European Humanities University (EHU), Lithuania, who has been imprisoned in Belarus since September 17, 2020. Nearly two years after her detention, in September 2022, Ms. Rabkova was sentenced to 15 years in prison in apparent retaliation for her nonviolent participation in nationwide protests over the re-election of President Alexander Lukashenko. The hearing was closed to the public.

Read about Marfa Rabkova and take action »

Professor Rahile Dawut, a world-renowned scholar of Uyghur studies, disappeared in China in December 2017. Dr. Dawut was a professor at Xinjiang University in China’s Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and is internationally recognized as an expert in Uyghur folklore and traditions. She has received awards and grants from China’s Ministry of Culture, and is the founder of a folklore institute. It was confirmed on September 21, 2023, that she has been sentenced to life in prison for reportedly “endangering state security.” In 2020, SAR recognized Dr. Dawut with a Courage to Think Award for her work, as well as that of all the scholars and students of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

Read about Rahile Dawut and take action »
Niloufar Bayani is a researcher, conservationist, and scholar, who was arrested in January 2018 by Iranian authorities, alongside eight of her colleagues, while conducting field research as program manager of the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation. Ms. Bayani is a former McGill University research assistant and alum, a Columbia University alum, and former project consultant for the UN Environment Programme. On November 23, 2019, authorities convicted and sentenced Ms. Bayani to ten years in prison for “contacts with the U.S. enemy state” and “gaining illegitimate income.”

Read about Niloufar Bayani and take action »

While in prison Ms. Bayani wrote and published “Climate Literacy in the Land of Oil: Interviews with female political prisoners in Evin.” In the piece, Ms. Bayani, surveys fellow prisoners on climate issues and explores potential reforms.

Read Niloufar Bayani’s manuscript »

Navigating new academic spaces in North America

Scholars at Risk hosted a webinar for at-risk scholars on "Navigating new academic spaces in North America" on February 15th, during which we facilitated a discussion between three alumni SAR scholars: Solomon Lemma, Mohammad Wasim Iqbal, and Hande Gurses.

The scholars talked about their personal experiences adapting to new teaching and publishing environments as well as the job application process, highlighting challenges and advice. In particular, the speakers emphasized the importance of building a strong network, asking for help, tapping into existing resources within a university community, and demonstrating how international expertise is a unique value add, among many other insights. To learn more, the webinar is available to view on YouTube.

SAR and CAFA file joint submission on academic freedom in the US
Last month, SAR and the Coalition for Academic Freedom in the Americas (CAFA) filed a joint submission to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Ms. Farida Shaheed. The submission reviews legal protections for academic freedom in the United States – and their limitations – and details recent challenges to academic freedom and freedom of expression in educational institutions. These include the passing of “anti-DEI” legislation in several states, Governor Ron DeSantis’ interventions in the functioning of Florida’s public higher education institutions, and broad failures to protect academic freedom on campus.

The submission will be considered by the Special Rapporteur for her upcoming thematic report on academic freedom and freedom of expression in educational institutions, which will be presented to the UN Human Rights Council in June 2024. Read the submission »

February 24, 2024 marked two years since the Russian Federation’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Since its launch in October 2022, the MSCA4Ukraine scheme, which provides fellowships and other support to displaced researchers from Ukraine, has supported 125 fellows in continuing their valuable work, as well as in accessing training, skill-building, and career development opportunities. These fellows have been hosted across 21 EU Member States and Horizon Europe Associated Countries.

The MSCA4Ukraine project, in collaboration with the European Commission, brings you the stories of five of those researchers, who discuss their research, life in their host countries, and the importance of continuing to contribute to Ukraine’s research and innovation sector from afar.
The MSCA4Ukraine scheme is funded by the European Commission and implemented by a consortium comprising Scholars at Risk Europe, hosted by Maynooth University (project coordinator), the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, and the European University Association, with the French national PAUSE programme hosted by the Collège de France, and the global Scholars at Risk Network participating as associated partners.

A warm welcome to new staff:

Please join us in welcoming Alexandra and Saba to SAR!

Alexandra joins SAR as Senior Events Officer to coordinate and manage the 2024 SAR Global Congress to be held in June in Vilnius, Lithuania. Prior to joining SAR, Alexandra worked in the geosciences sector as a Development Director, as well as Senior Philanthropy Officer at the Institute of International Education (IIE) for over 18 years. Read more about Alexandra »

Saba joins SAR as a Program Assistant for Protection, Membership & University Relations. Saba processes emergency fund grants to at-risk scholars, enabling their safe passage to arranged academic placements within the network, and contributes to university engagement strategy. Prior to joining SAR, Saba worked with at-risk communities, including refugees and asylum seekers, through her involvement with UNHCR and the International Rescue Committee. Read more about Saba »

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

Call for papers to be presented at the 3rd Conference on Academic Freedom in the Americas | Deadline: March 30, 2024
The Coalition for Academic Freedom in the Americas (CAFA) invites proposals for papers to be presented at the Third Conference on Academic Freedom in the Americas that will take place in November 2024 at the Washington, DC, campus of the University of Notre Dame (exact dates to be announced soon). This
conference will be hybrid, combining in person and virtual presentations. Interested parties are kindly asked to submit abstracts by March 30, 2024. Read more »

Academy in Exile 2024 Fellowship Program | Deadline: April 15, 2024
Academy in Exile is pleased to announce its 2024 fellowship program funded by the Mellon Foundation as well as the VolkswagenStiftung. AiE invites scholars at risk to apply for 12 fellowships (24 months) at TU Dortmund University and the Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities (KWI) Essen. Eligible are scholars from any country who have a PhD in the humanities, social sciences, or law, and who are at risk because of their academic work and/or civic engagement in human rights, democracy, and the pursuit of academic freedom. Read more »

Global Academy Call for Applications for the 2024-2025 academic year | Deadline: May 1, 2024
The MESA Global Academy offers competitive fellowships to Middle East Studies scholars from the MENA region who are currently displaced. The Global Academy awards $5,000 scholarships and facilitates programming for its fellows, including speaking engagements at partner universities across the United States, publication opportunities, mentoring, and professional development workshops. Read more »

Forum Curator at the Miami Institute for the Social Sciences | Deadline: Rolling
The Miami Institute for the Social Sciences—a virtual community of scholars bringing to the center of academic scholarship perspectives and understandings of the Global Majority in the social sciences and neighboring fields—invites scholars in the SAR Network to curate virtual forums on topics of interest to them in their fields. At the Miami Institute, curators of virtual forums tend to bring together a group of four to five colleagues across the Global South and North to reflect on a central question about their field to which the group responds first through relatively informal and short essays of 1,500 words. Once the essays are published online at the Miami Institute—with open access—the forum curator leads a virtual public conversation among the essay authors. See examples of virtual forums here. Please email the Miami Institute for the Social Sciences with interest (miamisocialsciences@gmail.com).

SELECT SAR & PARTNER EVENTS
See a full list of SAR events

US Student Advocacy Days in Washington, DC | March 20 - 21, 2024
Scholars at Risk’s annual US Student Advocacy Days convene
faculty and students in Washington, DC, to receive training and seek meetings with government representatives to raise awareness about wrongfully detained scholars and students. Read more »

SAR 2024 Global Congress | June 25, 2024
SAR invites you to register for the 2024 Global Congress to be held June 25-27, 2024, in partnership with the European Humanities University (EHU) in Vilnius, Lithuania. Global Congresses are SAR’s largest network events, and bring together leading scholars, advocates, students and professionals to rethink issues of academic freedom and related values, to learn from each other, and to help shape SAR’s agenda for the coming years. Read more »

Do you know someone who may want to read this newsletter? Please forward it to them! Stay connected with SAR by subscribing to our newsletters here.

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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