Introducing the Network
Agenda
SCHOLARS AT RISK (SAR) is an international network of higher education institutions and associations whose mission is to protect threatened scholars and promote academic freedom.
SAR is represented by more than 550 institutions in 42 countries. SAR Sections currently exist in 13 countries.
SAR Europe

- Is hosted at Maynooth University in Ireland, and reflects a mutual commitment to the principle of academic freedom
- Coordinates the activities of over 300 member universities in Europe including national SAR sections in 11 European countries and the 10-partner H2020 project Inspireurope
- Aims to strengthen a collective voice across institutions in order to contribute to informed policymaking
SAR’s work encompasses three key areas

PROTECTION

ADVOCACY

LEARNING
Protection
SAR protects scholars suffering grave threats to their lives, liberty, and well-being by arranging temporary research and teaching positions, and by providing advisory and referral services.  

300+ threatened scholars worldwide are provided with sanctuary and assistance through SAR every year.
SAR’s Protection work includes:

- **Scholar applications and referrals**: SAR evaluates each scholar’s situation, helping them to navigate resources to support them personally and academically.

- **Visiting academic appointments**: SAR works with network institutions to arrange short- to medium-term academic visits (6 months to 2 years) at universities, colleges, think tanks.

- **Transition assistance**: SAR advises and assists scholars in their relocation and adjustment, acquisition of new academic/professional skills, and networking. In the most urgent situations, SAR may be able to offer direct financial support.

- **Growing a network of support**: SAR advises universities, associations, and governments on establishing new protection programs and projects.
In the 2019–2020 academic year, SAR received almost 500 applications for assistance and arranged placements for 143 scholars from a wide variety of disciplines.
Of those scholars, the majority requiring assistance came from Turkey, Syria, Yemen, Iran, or Brazil.
How SAR Helps Individual Scholars

**STEP 1**

**Scholar Applies (or is referred)**

**Initial Evaluation**
SAR evaluates the scholar’s situation to determine how SAR and the network can best help them.

**STEP 2**

**Scholar Hosting**
The scholar may be hosted for a visiting academic position at a network institution.

**STEP 3**

**Advice & Assistance**
The scholar receives advice and assistance on relocation, integration adjustment, job skills, and more from SAR and the host institution.

**STEP 4**

**Transition**
The scholar receives support from SAR to transition to longer-term opportunities.
Identifying Scholars to Host

SAR maintains clear and regular communication with universities interest in hosting. We reach out to the network to find a good academic fit for scholars urgently seeking temporary placements.

We Recommend

- Contacting SAR staff to discuss next steps and fit once there is interest in hosting on campus
- Building a committee of interested university contacts available to participate in hosting discussions
- Starting these conversations with SAR—6 months before ideal start date

To ensure a strong academic match, some aspects to consider include

- Purpose of hosting an at-risk researcher
- Geography/diversity of candidates
- Discipline/field
- Risk
- Academic training/experience
- Publications
- Language
- Family
- Academic mentors on campus
Advocacy
SAR has established several initiatives to identify, document, and take action in response to attacks on scholars, students and their higher education communities.

341 attacks against higher education communities were documented in SAR’s *Free to Think 2020*
SAR’s Advocacy work includes:

- Monitoring attacks on academic freedom
- Advocating for imprisoned scholars
- Advising university students in advocacy efforts through seminars and legal clinics
- Demanding accountability and action through supranational, international, regional, and inter-state systems
Academic Freedom Monitoring Project

SAR secretariat staff and volunteer researchers around the world identify, document, and report on attacks on higher education.

THE GOAL

- Raising awareness
- Generating data-driven advocacy
- Increasing protection for scholars, students, and academic communities
- Promoting respect for academic freedom and higher education quality
Free to Think Report

SAR’s annual report analyzes thematic and regional trends and ongoing issues. In the period between September 1, 2019 to August 31, 2020, *Free to Think 2020* chronicled 341 reported attacks against higher education communities.

**WHAT IT INCLUDES:**

- Violent attacks on higher education communities
- Wrongful imprisonments and prosecutions of scholars
- Pressures on student expression
- Legislative and administrative threats
- COVID-related issues
Free to Think 2020

SAR’s *Free to Think 2020* reports the following:

- 124 incidents of violent attacks on higher education communities in 42 countries
- 96 incidents of wrongful imprisonment and 52 incidents of wrongful prosecution
- Current challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic:
  - Using the crisis to crackdown on activists
  - Attacks on COVID-related research & expression
  - Suspended asylum procedures in many countries
  - Limited resources to respond to increasing needs for support
Scholars in Prison Project

This project coordinates advocacy activities on behalf of scholars and students facing prosecution or imprisonment.

THE GOAL

- Robust case intake process
- Range of advocacy in coordination with family, legal counsel, and partner organizations
- Leverage Student Advocacy Seminars and Legal Clinics to play a crucial role in advocacy for the Scholars in Prison Project
Student Advocacy Seminars

These seminars encompass faculty-led human rights research and advocacy at SAR member institutions.

THE GOAL

- Conduct research and advocacy for Scholars in Prison cases
- Collaboration across seminars, with partner organizations, and families
- Seminars as for-credit courses or hybrid models
- Organizing campaigns through social media, campus organizing, media and press, local and national governments, and the United Nations
Academic Freedom Legal Clinics

These seminars encompass faculty-led human rights research and legal analysis at SAR member institutions.

THE GOAL

- Monitoring and reporting to SAR on attacks on higher education locally, or in countries of interest
- Legal analysis at local, regional or international level
- Development of advocacy in response to particular attacks
- Clinics are generally led by one faculty member, with 5-10 participants (typically, but not exclusively), at the graduate level
SAR convenes faculty, students and higher education community members to discuss global and regional academic freedom climates and to develop solutions that strengthen the university space.
SAR’s Learning work includes:

- **Hosting virtual conferences** and workshops
- **Offering a MOOC** and other open-source learning opportunities on pressing academic freedom concerns
- **Collaborating with global partners** on the annual Academic Freedom Index
- **Conducting surveys and issuing reports** on national, regional, and international academic freedom issues
- **Coordinating speaker series** of SAR scholars across network institutions
- **Opening global conversations** through podcasts and other accessible platforms
Promoting Core Higher Education Values

A proactive framework that recognizes the interconnectedness of core higher education values that maintain a healthy space to think, question, and share ideas.

**THE GOAL**

- Build understanding and respect for higher education values and their contributions to society
- Avoid “pitfalls” of neglect and oversimplification
- Provide a framework for dialogue and analyzing values-related incidents
- Develop expanded menu of pro-values responses to incidents
Scholar Speaker Series

The Vivian G. Prins Speaker Series offers an opportunity for SAR network institutions to invite to campus one or more scholars, each with a powerful and unique story to share.

THE GOAL

- Educate campus communities and the public about threats to academic freedom and attacks on scholars
- Provide an opportunity for organizations to invite at-risk scholars for short visits to share their powerful stories in a personal, meaningful way
Thank you.