

Universities in a Dangerous World

Defending Higher Education Communities & Values



Montreal, Canada
June 8-10, 2016



UNIVERSITIES IN A DANGEROUS WORLD SAR 2016 GLOBAL CONGRESS

182 participants

37 countries

48 speakers

58
member institutions

27 international organizations

87 universities

We are thrilled that so many of our members, partners, and friends were able to join us for the Scholars at Risk 2016 Global Congress, themed “Universities in a Dangerous World: Defending Higher Education Communities & Values.” The Congress was held in Montreal on June 7-10, 2016, in partnership with the McGill Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism, McGill Faculty of Law, and SAR Canada Section. More than 180 university and nonprofit leaders, faculty, staff, students and advocates from 37 countries came together to discuss seminal issues facing higher education today.

This was the eighth edition of the SAR Global Congress, our largest to date, and it came at a crucial moment. Attacks on scholars are at record levels. More scholars than ever have reached out to SAR for assistance — double the requests we received last year. SAR has a running caseload of over 500 scholars urgently seeking help, up from 300 normally. Many of these scholars are fleeing the crises in Syria, Iraq, and most recently Turkey. In response SAR has stepped up protection work—including arranging more placements than ever—and advocacy work aimed at raising awareness of the pressures on scholars and universities. The Global Congress is a special part of these efforts; a rare opportunity to bring together a large portion of the global SAR community of more than 400 member institutions in 40 countries to share, listen and learn. We are pleased to share with all the SAR members, partners and friends wherever they are this summary of the discussions held. We invite your feedback and thank you for your participation as we recommit ourselves to our work protecting scholars and promoting academic freedom.

Sincerely,

Robert Quinn
Executive Director



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“We are here for two reasons, because we wish to sustain and support and protect those men and women who are risking their lives in their home countries or elsewhere to improve the lives of all of us. These are not just teachers, they are researchers, they are librarians, they are writers, they are bloggers; all those people who take to the spoken and written word to advance the cause of thought, of inquiry, of ideas, and of a human community that is not afraid to think. We are also here today because we want to nurture a culture of respect for university values. A university is a place of academic freedom; it is place of autonomy, not of a craven deference to state needs. It is a place of social responsibility and it is a place that believes so deeply that to know is important in and of itself. **Thought builds society, thought builds human flourishing and human wellbeing.**”

Catharine Stimpson
*SAR Board Chair and University
Professor at New York University*

“ We are here... [to] protect those men and women who are risking their lives ...to advance the cause of thought, of inquiry, of ideas.”

KEYNOTES



Drawing on the theme, *Universities in a Dangerous World: Defending Higher Education Communities & Values*, keynote speakers addressed how their institutions have dealt with threats to physical security and core higher education values, including academic freedom, autonomy, and social responsibility. Drawing on their experience at institutions in Egypt, Hungary, South Africa, the US, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Israel and the Palestinian Territories, speakers highlighted the important role of the higher education sector, and noted that the university is a critical venue for asking questions, speaking truth to power, and pursuing free inquiry, and emphasized the importance of promoting and protecting rigorous debate and the open exchange of ideas.

“It has now become necessary for American universities to educate our students to understand that academic freedom is not a law of nature. It is not something to be taken for granted. It is rather a hard bought acquisition in centuries – long struggles for this right.”

Geoffrey Stone
University of Chicago, USA



“

“[Scholars] do often challenge authority – indeed it’s their job.”

Lisa Anderson



“We know we’re living in an era where democracy, the rule of law, and certainly academic freedom are under considerable pressure.”

John Shattuck

Central European University, Hungary



“Academic freedom is also a reflection of the very definition of education and scientific research. Academic freedom is a specific license to risk being mistaken in the service of a greater good: the search for truth. It is the right to be wrong. Because there is no trial without error [...] being wrong is a necessary and important part of education and research.”

Lisa Anderson

former President of the American University in Cairo, Egypt



“I like the term principled pragmatism, [but] there has to be a line in the sand which you will not cross, and the line in the sand is academic freedom. The line in the sand is the right to do science on your terms, the line in the sand is to create a free space in the institution, and if that is infringed - by the state, or the student body themselves, or the academe themselves - then you’ve got to hold the line.”

Adam Habib

University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa

“We shouldn’t just ask how we defend freedoms, but also how we promote [academic] freedoms.”

Jonathan Becker

Bard College, USA



“The values of academic freedom are being challenged and are being eroded in a subtle but fundamental manner that poses real questions about the commitment to, the understanding of, and the future of academic freedom.”

Geoffrey Stone

University of Chicago, USA

”

COURAGE TO THINK DIALOGUES



“The Courage to Think Dialogues to me really are the spiritual center of the Global Congress, the soul of what it is we do and what SAR is about.”

Rob Quinn

The Courage to Think Dialogues are conversations with scholars, their protectors, and their advocates, who share their experiences facing pressures and threats due to their work. Featuring individuals from Hong Kong, Thailand, Ecuador, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Turkey, Syria, and Iran, their stories are at the heart of the Scholars at Risk Network, highlighting both the reason the network was founded over 15 years ago and why this work remains so critically important today. Overwhelmingly, the scholars noted the limited space for academic freedom and freedom of expression; however, they highlighted some effective ways of pushing back against restrictive regimes or oppressive policy.



“We don’t have freedom but we have free people”

Halil Ibrahim Yenigün
scholar from Turkey





◀ “International scholars in particular are much more reticent to speak up now because we all have families there... the family impact is very costly.”

Manuela Picq, *scholar and journalist from Ecuador*



◀ “Scholars are the lights of every society. They show the way to a better life for the people. They are the leaders whose thoughts and activities improve the lives, improve the human rights, improve the democracy.”

Maryam Raifee, *daughter of SAR scholar-in-prison Mohammed Hossein Raifee, Iran*



◀ “To be ‘free to express yourself,’ it is a foreign word - it’s unheard of.”

Farai Gonzo, *SAR scholar from Zimbabwe*



◀ “How can I help other academics? Everyday when I wake up I ask this question. I want to return...I want to help. Always we are torn between safety and how can we help the students and other people who stayed in Syria.”

Hanadi Ibrahim, *SAR scholar from Syria*



◀ “You are trying to silence us to not speak truth to power... I am not afraid of you. Do whatever you want, I am going to continue to speak.”

Halil Ibrahim Yenigün, *scholar from Turkey*



◀ “[At my host university] I became a person again. I have been able to write a book. I’m writing. I’m teaching.”

David Himbara, *SAR scholar from Rwanda*



◀ An academic working in Thailand, you have to know the art of how to self-censor [...] know how, what, where, when; how to write and how to speak, and how much to speak.”

Thongchai Winichakul, *scholar of Southeast Asian History*

SAR Core Activity:
Protection



Providing sanctuary and assistance to threatened scholars worldwide

Scholars at Risk protects scholars suffering grave threats to their lives, liberty and well-being, in part by arranging positions of sanctuary at institutions in our network for those forced to flee. SAR also provides advisory services for displaced scholars who are struggling to restart their lives and their careers in their new location.

SUPPORTING HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE REFUGEE CRISIS

Ongoing conflicts in Syria and Iraq have forced millions of people to leave their countries, resulting in a steep increase in the number of refugees arriving in Europe. Many individuals and institutions within the SAR network and beyond are interested in learning what they can do to help, how to contribute to existing efforts, what the best practices are, and what innovations are taking place. This plenary session highlighted the activities of five organizations working in Europe and the Middle East to support scholars, students and higher education communities. Panelists discussed the challenges their organizations face, identified gaps in current efforts to support refugees in higher education both in Europe and in the region, and suggested ways in which governments, policy-makers and other stakeholders might better support the higher education sector as it seeks to meet the current challenges.

“We should be looking at the potential of these students whether they are in Europe or going back home.”

Ben Webster
Jamiya Project



“What are we educating for? If we look at what will happen after the conflict, and we look at conflicts like Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia [...] ending the war at some point will happen but [...] there has been a very big problem to find the professionals to build up these countries after war. So we are putting in place leadership and entrepreneurship education and training.”

Yannick Du Pont
SPARK, Netherlands

What I would like universities to do is to be more outspoken about the importance of preserving higher education in conflict and crisis [...] If we ever want these countries to get back to normal, they will need their university academics, they will need their bright young students [...] to go back to help rebuild. Without that there is no prospect of success for the country.”

Stephen Wordsworth
Cara, United Kingdom

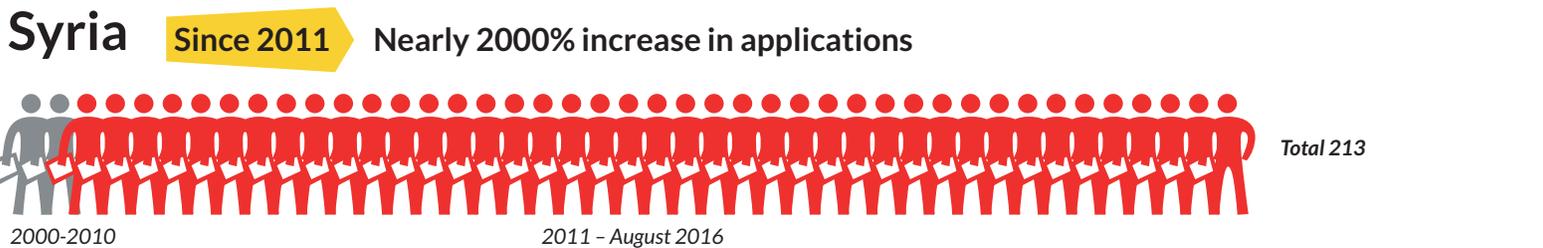
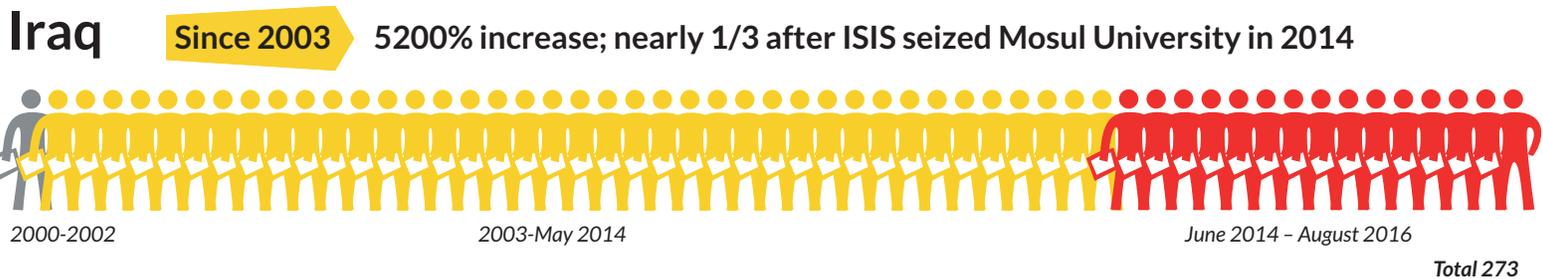
“There’s a huge responsibility to try to change the narrative in Europe around the refugee crisis ... Every euro that Europe puts in to support refugees, they will gain 2 euros within 5 years.”

Ben Webster
Jamiya Project

Responding to Crises



The SAR network exists to respond to everyday threats and especially urgent crises. Today more people than ever are risking their lives to flee oppression and conflict, among them a record number of scholars and students. The demand for SAR’s services has never been greater.



= 5 scholars

SESSIONS

Protecting Student Expression

Students from Norway, Egypt, Thailand, and Venezuela discussed how best to advocate for students' rights to peaceful, responsible, free, and open expression.

"We aren't violent. We even make a public statement before any demonstration that we aren't violent. [...] And then we are faced with acts of violence by the state. And then we are arrested and accused of using violence against the state. And then we have death sentences for students, sentences for 25 years in jail for students. And then the next time I can't convince the other students to be completely peaceful."

Hosam Fahmy

Tanta University, Egypt

"We [students] are not alone, we are going to demonstrate again that we are the future living in the present [...] we have the potential to guarantee a sustainable democracy for the rest of the years."

Fabio Valentini

Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, Venezuela



Wrongful Prosecutions

Focusing on wrongful prosecutions of scholars under lèse-majesté, sedition, anti-terrorism, blasphemy, defamation and other laws, panelists with expertise on Malaysia, Turkey and Thailand discussed the current legal environment for free expression and opportunities for advocacy.

“The head of the Junta and prime minister had made a comment in the press that academics were teaching people to question authority a little too much.”

Tyrell Haberkorn

Australian National University, Australia

“When my trial started, the investigating officer, when questioned as to why they were bringing this case against me, he said it was because I was an academic [...] because being a law lecturer, people might be influenced by what [I] said.”

Azmi Sharom

University of Malaya, Malaysia



Academic Freedom Threats in Canada and the US

Threats to academic freedom exist in every country, including in the US and Canada. From guns on campus to governmental funding cuts, to policies governing civility and safe spaces, the speakers on this panel discussed the various ways in which freedom of expression and academic freedom in particular are under threat even in so-called “safe countries.”

“Guns threaten the major goals of the classroom... they suggest that perhaps differences in conflict should not be or will not be solved peacefully... We are training students and young adults with critical thinking skills to be active and questioning citizens in our democracy... Guns in the classroom pose a major threat to free speech, and if there is anywhere in a democracy that we allow and encourage free speech, it would be in the classroom, I think.”

Firmin DeBrabander

Maryland Institute College of Art, USA

“Universities are not safe harbors and safe spaces, they are free harbors and free spaces... The purpose of a university is to promote a free and open expression of ideas.”

John Wilson

American Association of University Professors (AAUP), USA



PROMOTING VALUES IN INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Globalization is pushing a historic transformation of higher education, which presents many positive opportunities but also challenges for institutions, scholars, staff and students across the globe engaging with institutions and people in and from places where academic freedom, autonomy, and related values are not well understood or are severely limited. At the same time, partners in the global south raise concerns about equity in international partnerships and wariness about the motivations and intentions underlying these agreements. Scholars at Risk’s Promoting Values in International Partnerships project (PVIP) works to engage the global higher education sector in a dialogue about higher education values and the critical role they play in negotiating and navigating successful international partnerships. At the Global Congress, SAR convened two sessions on this topic, featuring representatives from higher education partnerships in North and South America, Africa, the Middle East and Europe sharing their experiences building successful international partnerships.



“We talk about persecuted scholars, but we have to also talk about persecuted practices and principles in higher education.”

Ken Prewitt
Columbia University, USA

“I also think it’s really important [...] to be able to explain that these discrete values are important because together they form part of a tapestry – they stitch together our narrative about the vision that we have for the way our institutions work or what our society is all about... Being able to articulate that is important, but being able to listen to the other narratives of our partners is absolutely essential.”

Laura Rumbley
Boston College Center for International Higher Education, USA





“We have a partnership in Mumbai to create an incubator and also one at Wits in South Africa, so what we did was create a tripartite relationship so we could have more south-south interaction and that has been really beneficial.”

Wendy Cukier
Brock University, Canada



“We, as a developing country, have a lot going on in terms of research and perhaps we should be looked at as partners, not only as markets.”

Simone Sarmento
Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, and The Brazilian International Education Association (FAUBAI)

SAR Core Activity:

Research and Learning



Around the world, the space for free inquiry and expression is shrinking. Scholars at Risk is bringing scholars, students and other higher education community members together to discuss global and regional academic freedom climates and to develop solutions that strengthen the university space. Year round programming includes:

- Scholar Speaker Series
- Workshops and conferences
- Coordinated working groups
- Trainings

“Africa has different priorities to get into partnerships compared to the western world [...] Africa is the only region that approaches internationalization and partnerships as risks, and these risks are varied, including brain drain, which is key, commercialization, and the dominance of other knowledges as opposed to the knowledges of the developing parts of the world, and in this case, Africa.”

James Otieno Jowi
Moi University, Kenya, and African Network for Internationalisation of Education (ANIE)



“Being respectful and mutual doesn’t mean that each side in a partnership doesn’t have different wants and needs, and you need to be forthright about that and you need to have relationships where these things can be discussed [...] To allow flexibility where flexibility is possible and to encourage it, and to encourage innovation – partner institutions have innovated in areas and then we bring it back to our home institutions because they’re doing it better than we are.”

Jonathan Becker
Bard College, USA





COURAGE TO THINK AWARD

The Courage to Think Defender Award recognizes individuals or groups for their contributions to the defense of scholars and academic freedom. Inaugurated in 2011 to recognize Aryeh Neier for his long career dedicated to free inquiry and expression, it was issued for a second time in 2015 to Dean Habib Kazdaghli of Manouba University in Tunisia for defending his university from extremist pressures after the Arab Spring, including in the face of prosecution and death threats.

The 2016 Courage to Think Defender Award was bestowed *in absentia* to the **more than 2,000 scholars and students wrongfully detained in Egypt**. The scale of arrests, deficient legal proceedings, and sentences imposed are unprecedented. Many of these scholars and students are in jail merely for expressing their views and resisting autocratic takeover of the university space and society. Accepting the award on their behalf were four students from SAR network institutions who campaigned for wrongly detained scholars as part of their participation in the SAR Student Advocacy Seminars.





Dr. Emad Shahin, who was sentenced to death in absentia in Egypt, speaks with Nathalie Des Rosiers about free expression in Egypt and his experience as a scholar-at-risk.



“The painful thing about it is the longer it goes the more painful it becomes, because you get homesick, you feel the pressure of injustice.”

“It is an honor today to take the stage on behalf of hundreds of scholars and thousands of students in Egypt, to give voice to their brave efforts, and to mark their courage to peacefully exercise their free expression despite the imminent risks. We are inspired by our Egyptian colleagues and look forward to, one day, handing this award over to them in person.”

Madison Hunke
University of Iowa, USA

“Your life has changed completely. Everything has changed, even the life of those around you. It’s a life changer, not a game changer.”

“Universities and students are usually at the forefront of protests and free inquiry. [...] There is a deliberate effort to subdue society into conformity, to demobilize society and reassert the grip of the military over public life.”

Emad Shahin
Georgetown University, USA

SAR Core Activity:
Advocacy



Scholars, students and higher education communities are often threatened suddenly, without warning. Scholars at Risk has established several initiatives to identify, document and take action in response to these threats and attacks.

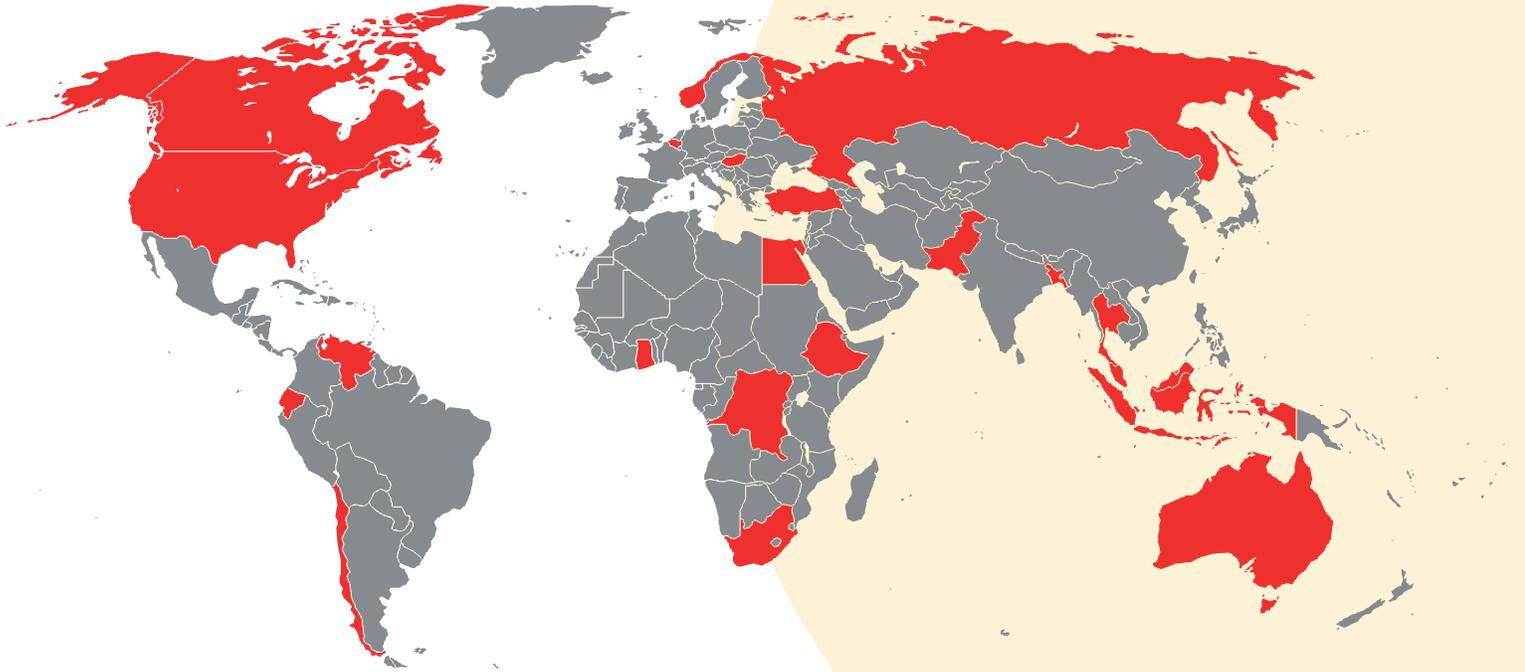
- **Academic Freedom Monitoring Project** identifies and reports on attacks on higher education communities
- **Student Advocacy Seminars** mobilize students at member institutions to conduct research and advocate on behalf of imprisoned scholars and students
- **Action Alerts and Campaigns** call on government and other key stakeholders to protect the human rights and well-being of members of higher education communities

“In recognition of the courage that has been shown by so many Egyptian scholars and students, in recognition to their commitment to academic freedom, in recognition of their commitment to free inquiry [...] our 2016 Courage to Think Defender Award goes *in absentia* to the over 2000 wrongfully detained scholars and students of Egypt.”

Catharine Stimpson
SAR Board Chair and University Professor, New York University, USA



WORKSHOPS



2016 Global Congress workshops included participants from 22 countries: Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Canada, Chile, DRC, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Hungary, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Norway, Pakistan, Russia, South Africa, Thailand, Turkey, USA, Venezuela

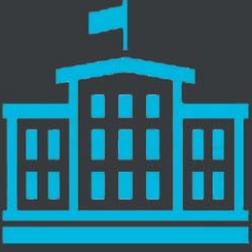
The Global Congress was preceded by workshops on SAR's Protecting Student Expression and Wrongful Prosecutions projects.

When undertaken responsibly, organized student expression is an essential part of the higher education experience, preparing students to engage meaningfully in society. However, force is too often used to limit peaceful student expression. SAR's **Protecting Student Expression project** aims to remind higher education leaders, society, and the state of their responsibility to protect students and their freedom of expression. Workshop participants, including student leaders, discussed guidelines and best practices for responsible, organized student expression.

In 2015, SAR released *Free to Think*, a report documenting 333 attacks on higher education in 65 countries. Scholars at Risk is extending this work by developing a **Wrongful Prosecutions Project**, focusing on one of the types of attacks highlighted in the report – wrongful prosecutions of scholars under certain types of laws, including *lèse-majesté*, sedition, anti-terrorism, blasphemy, and defamation. The workshop brought together 28 individuals from 18 countries to develop advocacy objectives and an action plan for a campaign aimed at raising awareness about laws used to restrict freedom of thought and expression.



Membership



The network is the foundation for all SAR activities. Now made up of over 400 higher education institutions, associations, and networks in 40 countries around the world. SAR's network members are committed to the principle that scholars and students should be free to work and learn without fear or intimidation. Membership in the SAR Network allows them to put this principle into action by:

- Organizing lectures, panels and other events
- Advocating on behalf of imprisoned, detained or unjustly prosecuted scholars
- Hosting threatened scholars
- Participating in SAR conferences
- Engaging students with SAR's work
- Joining working groups

**40% increase
in network
membership
since the 2014
SAR Global
Congress**

NETWORKING



Students explored many opportunities to get involved in SAR's work at the Global Congress, including networking receptions, activity expo tables, training sessions and workshops. Students can also work with SAR through volunteer and internship opportunities, Student Advocacy Seminars, inviting a SAR scholar to speak on campus, and by engaging with SAR on social media.



SUPPORTERS

Scholars at Risk is grateful for the generosity of our supporters, including especially the Office of the Provost and New York University for hosting Scholars at Risk for over ten years. (List from September 2015 – August 2016)

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Inaugurated at the Global Congress, the Scholars at Risk Ambassadors Council is a group of globally distinguished leaders from law, diplomacy, higher education, human rights, philanthropy, and the arts and sciences who share SAR's vision of quality, socially-engaged higher education that serves the broadest public good.

Lloyd Axworthy Chair; statesman & academic; current chancellor of St. Paul's University College

Anthony Appiah Cultural theorist, novelist, professor of Philosophy & Law at New York University

Louise Arbour Former justice of the Supreme Court of Canada & UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

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ENGAGEMENT



M.A. Becker
@mabecker17



The important work by the team at Scholars At Risk, more crucial than ever.
[@RobQ_SAR](#) [@sinead_SAR](#) [ihenow.com/21cLui](#) [#academicfreedom](#)
6:47 AM - 10 Jun 2016



Alyssa Petersen
@alysapete



Thank you [@ScholarsAtRisk](#) for the amazing Congress!! We're so inspired and excited to do our part. Thank you sincerely from [@uidaho!](#)
11:35 AM - 10 Jun 2016



Twitter: 28% increase in followers and 52% increase in engagement since SAR Global Congress



Yannick du Pont
@ydpont



Excellent programme by scholars at risk in Montreal. How to help scholars being prosecuted [@sparkorg](#) [@scholarsatrisk](#) [pic.twitter.com/6FAOWz73cT](#)
5:54 AM - 9 Jun 2016



Sijbolt Noorda
@SijboltNoorda



"freedom of inquiry, the right to be wrong criticized as disobedience to authority" former rector American University Cairo [@ScholarsAtRisk](#)
1:21 PM - 8 Jun 2016

1,260: number of livestream views



Guus van Zwoll
@AWvanZwoll



After inspiring panels, I'm leaving Montreal with new contacts and many new ideas. Thanks [@ScholarsAtRisk](#) for a great [#SARcongress](#)
4:44 PM - 9 Jun 2016



Facebook: 18% increase in likes and 272% increase in engagement since SAR Global Congress



Viviana Fernandez
@Vafi1217



Powerful words from the courage to think sessions: "I became a person again, keep up the good work [@ScholarsAtRisk!](#)"
10:54 AM - 8 Jun 2016



Manuela Picq
@manuelapicq



A questioning spirit is intrinsically subversive and anti-authoritarian
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SAIH
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We are in Montreal to contribute to [@ScholarsAtRisk](#) "Protecting Student Expression Project" [#SARglobalcongress](#) [pic.twitter.com/1itgjtq7q5](#)
7:46 AM - 8 Jun 2016



PHRGE - NU Law
@PHRGE



Egypt student rep: "While we have free people in authoritarian Egypt, many of them are in prison." [#SARCongress](#) [@ScholarsAtRisk](#)
9:06 AM - 9 Jun 2016

SCHOLARS AT RISK

NETWORK

protection advocacy learning

“ Overall I believe the congress was extremely well organized and the discussions very rich. The group of people assembled were truly remarkable and I had some of the most challenging and enlightening conversations I have had in some time.”

Anonymous, Congress evaluation

Based at New York University, Scholars at Risk (SAR) is an international network of institutions and individuals whose mission it is to promote academic freedom and protect scholars, so scholars' ideas are not lost and they can keep working until conditions improve and they can return to their home countries.

SAR arranges temporary academic positions for scholars facing grave threats, provides advisory services for scholars

and their hosts, campaigns for imprisoned scholars and students, monitors and reports attacks on higher education communities, and leads development of new tools and strategies for promoting academic freedom and improving respect for university values everywhere.

Institutions and individuals who share in these values are invited to join the network.

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