



**Emre Celik, Contributor**

President @RumiForum, Washington DC

# Class Dismissed - The demise of academia in Erdogan's Turkey

04/04/2017 06:36 pm ET



REUTERS

Demonstrators protest the purge of thousands of education staff in front of Istanbul University at Beyazıt square in Istanbul, Turkey.

*We are seeing reports of academics being investigated and subjected to penalties for expressing their opinions about the conflict in the southeast. While we may not agree with the opinions expressed by those academics, we are nevertheless concerned about this pressure having a chilling effect on legitimate political discourse across Turkish society regarding the sources of and solutions to the ongoing violence. In democratic societies it is imperative that citizens have the opportunity to express their views, even controversial or unpopular ones.*

*Expressions of concern about violence do not equal support for terrorism. Criticism of government does not equal treason. Turkish democracy is strong enough and resilient enough to embrace free expression of uncomfortable ideas. This statement by John Bass, US Ambassador to Turkey was issued in response to academics signing a petition on the demise of the Kurdish peace process - it was issued six months before the attempted coup of July 15, 2016.*

Such is the burden of being an academic in Turkey. Never has academia had free reign to think and write at will like their counterparts in the West. Turkey's modern history is scattered with academic abuses.

Since the coup more than 7300 academics (including more than 1500 deans) have been purged and 15 universities expropriated by the Government of President Recep T. Erdogan. So consequential was the purge of deans that at one university, the Rector, Prof Dr Ihsan Gunaydin became the dean of six faculties. This scenario is not unique.

Alongside the attacks on tertiary education and academia, the numbers surrounding other educational sectors are mind boggling: 44,000 staff from the Education Ministry, the great majority of them teachers, 1280 schools, 800 dormitories and 550 foundations (many of them educational). Upwards of 90,000 civilians have been detained, with roughly half arrested, and more than 120,000 have been fired or suspended from their jobs. An extensive list of arrests and purges can be found at TurkeyPurge.com which tracks persecution of civil servants and others and expropriation of assets or shut downs by the Government.

A great deal of this is due to perceived or fabricated links to Fethullah Gulen and his wider network of civil society and educational institutions known as the Hizmet Movement. Gulen, who is based in Pennsylvania, known for his advocacy of education and compatibility of Islam and science, democratic values, community service and inclusive societies and

interfaith relations is accused by Erdogan of being the mastermind of the coup. Gulen has denied any link and 84 boxes of alleged evidence sent to the US Justice Department have not resulted in any judicial proceedings against Gulen. Erdogan appears obsessed with Gulen in this regard and has attacked Hizmet affiliated institutions world-wide. Gulen has written extensively in the Western press including WSJ, Financial Times and New York Times on issues of radicalism and CVE, freedoms and democracy and is highly regarded in both the West and the Muslim world. The Hizmet Movement is active in more than 160 countries.

Alongside the dismissal and jailing of academics there are also tens of thousands of students affected by the academic disruption, including those transferred to government universities while still paying private tuition fees and numerous students expelled for alleged links to Gulen affiliated institutions.

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Many universities and academic associations from around the world have stood by their Turkish colleagues through letters of support or condemnation of the Turkish government including American Association of University Professors, Endangered Scholars Worldwide, Scholars at Risk and the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies. The Middle East Studies Association (MESA) has itself written more than 20 letters since January 2016 to the Turkish Government and on numerous occasions called on the United States Administration to act on behalf of academic freedom in Turkey.

Some have called the dismissals an "intellectual massacre" leading some academics to street protests and others who want to continue their educational dialogue with students to set up informal classes in parks outside of university campuses. One academic said of her dissent by teaching in a park: "Of course, this will be seen as a threat by those who take our presence at the university as a threat, but we are aware that the struggle for democracy, peace and freedoms have a price."

Such is the psychological trauma and burden faced by scholars who have been dismissed it has sadly led some to suicide. It has also lead to an upsurge in asylum requests by Turkish scholars.

Turkey is in the grips of an existential struggle for the survival of its academia. Scholars are being barred from travel, expressing views and signing petitions - some US citizens of Turkish background now languish in Turkish prisons. One such case is that of **NASA** scientist Serkan Golge of Newport News, Virginia, who, while visiting family in August 2016 was arrested and locked up due to alleged links to the Hizmet Movement. Seven months on he remains in prison without sentence or court date. It is believed that a neighbor reported him to the authorities alleging he was a spy for the **CIA**.

Merve Kayikci writes the harrowing story of her jailed academic father and his long-time friend who now share a Turkish cell, being labelled by Pro-Government media as "traitor academics" for allegedly being involved in the 2016 coup . Such are the consequences of the purges and dismissals, that the families of Kayikci {and the like) are ostracized by neighbors and friends who fear appearing to be in support of accused or detained people - fearing for their own livelihood and safety and themselves being accused of "treason".

Turkey's current intellectual state is succinctly summarized by Turkish journalist Yavuz Baydar:

"Widening more by each and every decree, this is now a country resembling Germany of 1930, which ended up chasing out its elite beyond its borders. What I know for certain, that there will no longer be any possibilities for our academicians 'cleansed' to find work and, live in decency and honor."

Previous to his jailing Prof Dr Sedat Laciner, a professor of international relations and an expert on foreign policy and former Rector of Canakkale University (2011 -2015) wrote :

*All opponents incrementally become a terrorist... Within the scope of this framework, Kurdish, left-winger, Alawi, Gu/en group and many other dissident groups were branded as terrorist and criminal.*

Now Laciner himself languishes in a Turkish prison for expressing views distasteful to Erdogan and the Turkish Government. In a letter written from his prison cell Laciner aptly describes his situation, reflecting also the precarious and dangerous status of academia in Turkey:

"I have no idea when I could see a judge. My life and my family are under deathly risks and we need your support. Please help us."

At the hands of Erdogan the demise of a free, safe and independent academia in Turkey is nearing.

**NOTE:** Those interested in supporting Turkish scholars can visit Scholars at Risk

<https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/turkey-response/>

*Emre Celik* is president of DC based Rumi Forum a civil society organization dedicated to interfaith dialogue. He is also currently pursuing his PhD in Islamic Studies [@emrecelikrumi](#)

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## hungryforourjobs

We have been on an INDEFINITE HUNGER STRIKE for our job, bread and honour from 9th of March 2017.

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### Call for Individuals and Organizations



 0 Comments

**We call upon all the world's people into action to be with us in the battle of bread and honour!**

We were two public workers working as academic and primary school teacher before being purged under government decrees declared after coup attempt in Turkey. One night,

*without any explanation and administrative investigation*, we were told that we do not have jobs anymore. Due to state of emergency, there is *no legal mechanism left in the country* to which we can appeal. We did not accept this unlawful, unjust dismissals and started sit-in strike in front of Human Rights Statue located on a central square in Ankara claiming *"We Want Our Jobs Back"*. Since then, the police have attacked our resistance spot 30 times detaining us violently. Each time we came back to the resistance spot and continued to our sit-in strike. After 4 months, *we decided to put our bodies into hunger* so that those turning a blind eye shall hear our voice. We have been on an indefinite hunger strike since 9th of March 2017. It has been 70 days since we live only with water, salt and sugar.

Our struggle not only became the voice of tens of thousands being purged under government decrees but also *supported by many individuals and organizations* standing against injustice. Intellectuals, artists, academics, doctors, lawyers and politicians from Turkey and around the world declared their solidarity with *our struggle for bread and honour*.

We maintain our hunger strike at the same spot, the Human Rights Statue on Yüksel Street, Ankara. If you come to visit us, we will be waiting for you 24 hours and 7 days. Certainly, *you can also raise solidarity by sharing your support messages, pictures and videos, spreading our word in press, social media or contacting Turkish authorities about our case*. Although we are on high spirits, our bodies are shrinking day by day. So please get into the action as soon as possible.

We salute you with resistance and struggle.

Academic Nuriye Gülmen

Primary School Teacher Semih Özakça

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We have been on an INDEFINITE HUNGER STRIKE for our job, bread and honour from 9th of March 2017.

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## Solidarity Message from Margaret E. Atwood



**Canadian author Margaret Atwood poses for a portrait as she promotes her film "Payback" in Toronto, March 6, 2012. REUTERS/Mark Blinch (CANADA - Tags: ENTERTAINMENT HEADSHOT)**

### 0 Comments

"Nuriye Gülmen and Semih Özakça were both terminated from their jobs by emergency decrees following the coup attempt in July 2016. Gülmen and Özakça are two of 4,811 academics and 40,000 teachers who were dismissed by emergency decrees. They have now been on hunger strike for over 80 days and were arrested on 22 May 2017 in dawn raids, with police breaking down their doors. They are in prison in Ankara. Their lives are now in danger due to their desire for justice. They should be released and their jobs should be reinstated. Please support all people advocating freedom of expression and democracy in Turkey."

Margaret Atwood



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## SCHOLARS AT RISK

N E T W O R K

(<http://scholarsatrisk.org/>)

GET HELP

([HTTP://SCHOLARSATRISK.ORG/GET-HELP/](http://scholarsatrisk.org/GET-HELP/))

*Protecting scholars and the freedom to think, question and share ideas (<http://scholarsatrisk.org/about/>)*

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## Release and drop charges against Dr. Merera Gudina

May 5, 2017 -- Scholars at Risk (SAR) is gravely concerned that Dr. Merera Gudina was arrested and is currently facing multiple charges in apparent retaliation for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression and association. Dr. Gudina is scheduled to attend his next hearing on June 2, 2017.

SAR understands that on December 1, 2016, Dr. Gudina, a former political science professor at Addis Ababa University, returned to Ethiopia following a trip to Belgium, where he addressed members of the European Union Parliament about alleged human rights violations and the current political crisis in Ethiopia. That day, Ethiopian security officers reportedly arrested Dr. Gudina at his home for “trespassing the state of emergency rules of the country,” – specifically for violating a prohibition on communication with “banned terrorist organisations and anti-peace groups.” He was then brought to Maekelawi Prison, where he was



reportedly placed in solitary confinement.

On February 23, 2017, Dr. Gudina was formally charged with violating Articles 27/1, 32/1/A & B, and 238/1 & 2 of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia's Criminal Code (ECC), which are in connection to accusations that he organized widespread protests in Ethiopia since October 2016 and that he attempted to overthrow Ethiopia's constitutional order. Dr. Gudina has additionally been charged with violating ECC Article 486/B for "giving a false and damaging statement about the government to the media," and Article 12/1 of the State of Emergency Proclamation for the Maintenance of Public Peace and Security No.1/2016, which criminalizes contact with individuals designated by the government as terrorists. SAR understands that Dr. Gudina, who has refuted these charges in court, is scheduled to attend his next hearing on June 2, 2017.

SAR calls for emails, letters, and faxes respectfully urging the authorities to release and drop all charges against Dr. Gudina ahead of his next hearing; or, pending this, to ensure his well-being while in custody, including access to legal counsel and family, and his removal from solitary confinement, and to ensure that his case proceeds in a manner consistent with Ethiopia's obligations under international law, in particular internationally recognized standards of due process, fair trial, and free expression.

*An independent non-profit organization of scientists, physicians, engineers and scholars dedicated to protecting the human rights and scientific freedom of our colleagues around the world.*

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# The Committee of Concerned Scientists Requests Support From The Iranian Academy of Medical Sciences for Ahmadreza Djalali

March 27, 2017



Iran has detained Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali, a physician specializing in Emergency and Disaster Medicine. Dr. Djalali has been confined almost a year without a hearing or trial to date. Dr. Djalali has been threatened with a death sentence by his inquisitors. In an effort to obtain support from groups that the Iranian authorities may listen to, CCS has requested the Iranian Academy of Medical Sciences' members to speak on behalf of Dr. Djalali and request his immediate release.

March 10, 2017

Professor Seyed Alireza Marandi, M.D., President  
The Iranian Academy of Medical Sciences  
National Library Blvd., Haqqani Expressway  
POB 19395/4655 Tehran  
Islamic Republic of Iran

SHARES

Dear Dr. Marandi:

The Committee of Concerned Scientists is an independent organization of scientists, physicians, engineers and scholars devoted to the protection and advancement of human rights and scientific freedom for colleagues all over the world.

We write to you today to express our grave concern for Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali, an Iranian-born resident of Sweden, who is an expert on Emergency and Disaster Medicine. He had been to Tehran numerous times to work with state organizations such as the Red Crescent and never experienced any problems.

On April 24, 2016, during his visit on the invitation of Tehran University, Dr. Djalali was arrested and taken to Evin prison. He was held in solitary confinement for seven months with no access to an attorney, continually interrogated and unable to see his family. Eventually he was transferred to a public ward and was permitted legal counsel.

On December 25th, 2016, Dr. Djalali was informed that he was going to receive the maximum sentence, which was the death penalty, for "collaborating with enemy states." Previously, however, he was informed that his case had been reviewed and his trial would begin shortly. Dr. Djalali informed his family that he was forced to sign a confession, but its contents are unknown to him. He is currently on a hunger strike, taking fluids but refusing food.

The case of Dr. Djalali has been in the news and has become widely known. Besides the enormous suffering that it causes to Dr. Djalali and his family, it is hurting the image of the Islamic Republic of Iran. His colleagues, as well as medical doctors all over the world, have been united in rejecting charges against Dr. Djalali and demanding his unconditional release. Governments and human rights organizations have spoken on his behalf.

We are asking for your help. We trust that you will use your and

SHARES



Sincerely,

Joel L. Lebowitz, Paul H. Plotz, Walter Reich, Eugene M.  
Chudnovsky, Alexander Greer  
Co-Chairs, Committee of Concerned Scientists

Cc:

Professor Fereidoun Azizi, VP for Research, [azizi@endocrin.ac.ir](mailto:azizi@endocrin.ac.ir)  
Mrs. Nazi Afkam, Program Manager, [afkham@ams.ac.ir](mailto:afkham@ams.ac.ir)

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Filed Under: [Iran](#) Tagged With: [Ahmadreza Djalali](#), [Evin Prison](#), [Iran](#), [Scientists](#)

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CCS Requests  
International Support for  
Swedish Scientist in Iran



Committee of Concerned  
Scientists Joined Other  
Human Rights Groups,  
Co-Workers and  
Colleagues of Ahmadreza  
Djalali to Appeal For His  
Release



Physician Ahmadreza  
Djalali in Iran Has  
Resumed Hunger Strike  
Also Refuses Liquids



European Union  
Responds to CCS Request  
to Support Djalali

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# Social Science Researcher and Anthropologist, Dr. Stella Nyanzi, at Makerere University in Uganda, Was Arrested and Charged for Criticizing the President and His Wife on Facebook

May 7, 2017

**D**r. Stella Nyanzi a Professor at Makerere University in

Uganda was arrested and charged under the Computer Misuse Act of 2011 for insulting the President on Facebook. Dr. Nyanzi was advocating that schools supply sanitary pads to girls so that they may attend to school during their menstrual cycle. Many girls were not showing up in school to avoid embarrassment.

The President was not a supporter of this issue. As a result Dr. Nyanzi was quite “colorfully” critical of the President and his wife on Facebook. Dr. Nyanzi, however, does have the right to express herself non-violently. She has been charged with “cyber harassment” and violating the President’s “right to privacy.”

Under Uganda’s constitution and international human rights agreements, to which Uganda is a signatory, Dr. Nyanzi’s rights are protected. CCS wrote to the Minister of Justice to request her immediate and unconditional release. A hearing is set to address her bail for May 10.

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# 65 year old Venezuelan Economist, Professor Santiago Guevara, arrested for Articles Critical of Government Policies

May 7, 2017

**P**rofessor Santiago Guevara, a 65 year-old Venezuelan Economist, was served a summons by representatives of the Directorate of Military Counterintelligence on February 21st. He was instructed to report on February 23rd to DGCIM where he



was charged before a military court with “treason,” “incitement to rebellion,” and crimes against the “security and independence of the nation.” Dr. Guevara had made comments in the media regarding his views of current economic and political policies critical of the Venezuelan government. Professor Guevara, however, has the right to exercise his rights to non-violent freedom of expression and academic freedom – rights that are expressly protected under international human rights agreements to which Venezuela is a party. CCS wrote President Maduro requesting the release of Dr. Guevara and that all charges against him be dropped.

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# Malaysian Student Arrested for Possession of Books

May 25, 2017

**S**iti Noor Aishah Atam, an Islamic Studies graduate student at the Universiti Malaya was convicted and sentenced for the crime of possessing 12 books. She was sentenced to five years in prison. CCS has written to the Prime Minister of Malaysia requesting that he review this case, drop the charges and release Atam.

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# Engineer arrested at worksite while meeting with engineers and contractors in Bahrain

May 25, 2017

**S**ayed Alawi Hussain al-Alawi, a telecom engineer with Batelco was arrested on October 24 while meeting with other engineers and contractors at a Batelco worksite. He has not been charged. His spouse has contacted Bahraini authorities but has been unable to determine why he is being held. CCS wrote to the King requesting his assistance in this matter – requesting that

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Turkey Continues to Question, Detain, Arrest, and Terminate Employment of Academics That Signed Peace Petition



Committee of Concerned Scientists and Endangered Scholars Worldwide Advocate for NASA Scientist Arrested in Turkey



Social Science Researcher and Anthropologist, Dr. Stella Nyanzi, at Makerere University in Uganda, Was Arrested and Charged for Criticizing the President and His Wife on Facebook



URGENT ACTION: Tweet Storm in Support of Physicist and Human Rights Activist Narges Mohammadi

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US Executive Order Could Have Serious Consequences on US Science and Academia



New Court Date for Turkish Writers and Head of the Department of Forensic Medicine at Istanbul University



65 year old Venezuelan Economist, Professor Santiago Guevara, arrested for Articles Critical of Government Policies



Engineer arrested at worksite while meeting with engineers and contractors in Bahrain



Over 5,500 Academics Dismissed from Positions in Turkey since Rule of Law Suspended



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Bahrainian Engineer Due  
in Court on September  
19 Following Arrest 2  
Years Ago



Dr. Abdul Jalil al-Singace  
In Need of Medical Care



Bahraini Neurosurgeon  
Arrested and Charged  
with "Illegal Gathering"  
for Participating in  
a Sit-In



59 year-old Electrical  
Engineer Confined in Jail  
for Four Years – Hearings  
Re-Scheduled 20 Times,  
Finally Sentenced to 10  
Years in Prison

# A Safe Haven for Scholars at Risk

*While the fellowship only lasts 10 months, those involved with the Scholars at Risk program aim to make their time as productive as possible and set up scholars for success after Harvard.*

BY SARAH WU, CRIMSON STAFF WRITER

DECEMBER 14, 2016

**UPDATED: December 14, 2016, at 4:41 a.m.**

Staring at the computer screen, Mahmoud Hariri watched men guided only by the light of their smartphones salvage bodies from the rubble remains of buildings. This attack occurred in Hariri's hometown of eastern Aleppo, Syria, though he viewed the rescue efforts from the safety of Harvard's campus.

Prior to his arrival at Harvard, Hariri provided trauma care as a surgeon in eastern Aleppo hospitals and trained junior physicians at a medical school he founded with colleagues two years ago. As political tensions and fighting in Syria escalated, Hariri's family stayed in neighboring Turkey while he traveled back and forth between the two countries.





Mahmoud Hariri working at his desk in the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative office as a current Scholars at Risk fellow.  
SARAH WU

This fall, Hariri joined thousands of others in moving to Harvard for the beginning of the semester—but while many were coming back from internships and summer vacations, Hariri and four other scholars were escaping wars and oppressive regimes on a 10-month fellowship through the Harvard Scholars at Risk program.

Nearing its 15th year of operation, Harvard’s Scholars at Risk program—the largest chapter within a broader network—hosts scholars every year who are fleeing “dangerous conditions” and intends to provide a safe haven for scholars facing potential harm, which “may be related to the scholar’s work, but it may also be a consequence of the scholar’s ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or political opinions,” according to the program’s website.

While the fellowship only lasts 10 months, those involved with the program aim to make their time as productive as possible and set up scholars for success after Harvard.

## A PROGRAM’S FOUNDING

On Human Rights Day in 1997, a NPR program on persecuted intellectuals prompted then-University of Chicago professor Katie Trumpener to email the university’s president and provost about the school’s relationship with academic freedom.

In the email, she discussed “the singularly important role” Jewish refugees from Germany played in the intellectual development of the University of Chicago in the 30s and 40s. She challenged the university’s leadership to consider establishing a fellowship for professors under contemporary oppressive regimes to find a place of “intellectual refuge and sanctuary,” or “a first place to catch their breath and think what to do next?”

After receiving a polite, but uninterested, response, Trumpener shared her ideas with then-director of the school’s Human Rights Program, Jacqueline Bhabha. Bhabha and her team embraced the idea and brought it to fruition.

In 1999, the Human Rights Program of the University of Chicago founded Scholars at Risk. With a MacArthur start-up grant, Bhabha, who currently co-chairs Harvard’s SAR program, hired lawyer and human rights activist Robert Quinn as the first program director for the international umbrella organization. He still serves in that position today.

Quinn said though the network has grown significantly in recent years, “at the same time, we have seen conditions worsen in a number of countries, so we are still racing to keep up.” Quinn noted that “there’s a huge well of goodwill in the higher education sector to see [Scholars at Risk] work.”

Harvard English professor Stephen Greenblatt, who served on the Executive Council of the

Modern Language Association with Trumpener, said he learned of the program from her, and her motivations to create the program deeply resonated with him.

Greenblatt, current co-chair of the Harvard SAR, immediately set to work and spoke to then-University President Lawrence H. Summers about bringing the initiative to Harvard.

“It is exactly the kind of thing that a great university like Harvard needs to do more of—use our intellectual community to help advance intellectual progress and moral rightness,” Summers said, reflecting on the decision to introduce the program to Harvard.

## HOLDING ONTO HOPE

Scrolling through the Facebook profile of a young man, Hariri brooded over the atrocities faced by his countrymen who are not able to flee.

“This guy, my friend, has been killed today morning. To be honest, I’m afraid when I’m opening the Facebook that I will find sad news,” he said.

From witnessing the death of a patient on his operating table during an attack on his hospital, to hearing about the death of the last pediatrician in Eastern Aleppo, uncertainty and loss are normal in Hariri’s life.

“They are losing their hope day by day,” Hariri said of his colleagues. “I feel myself guilty, leaving them and being here, just living safe with my family. In the meantime, there are people who are suffering and risking their lives.”

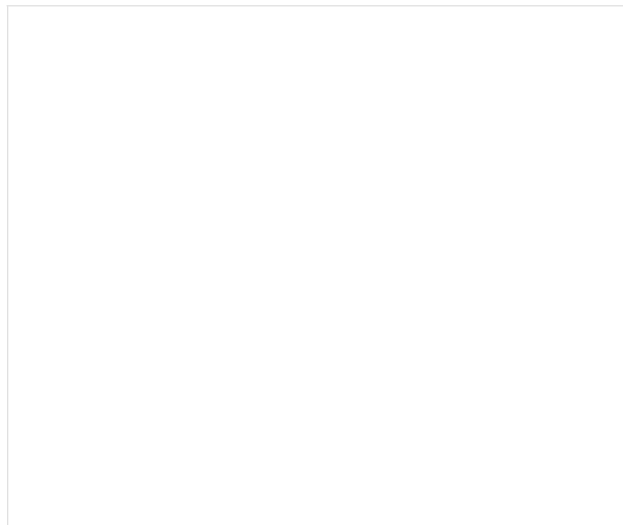
Following Hariri’s visit to Los Angeles two years ago to speak at an American College of Surgeons conference, he received an email from a medical student who had attended. The email informed him about Harvard SAR, and presented a nomination offer.

After deliberating with friends, Hariri decided the opportunity could be useful for advancing his work in Syria. He applied and was accepted.

Hariri’s story is harrowing, but it is not uncommon among the scholars accepted by Harvard for participation in the program. Other fellows this year hail from Cuba, Ethiopia, Iran, and Nigeria, with a sixth arriving in February, according to Harvard’s SAR program director Jane Unrue.

The seventh fellowship was awarded to Ethiopian scholar Bekele Gerba, who is currently incarcerated. This marks the first year in which the program has awarded a scholarship to someone in prison.

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Past years' scholars have included a Cambodian documentary filmmaker, a Uyghur historian, an Iraqi Shakespeare scholar, a Sri Lankan mathematician, and a Russian journalist.

Beekan Erena, one of last year's fellows, escaped persecution by the Ethiopian government for challenging their treatment of the Oromo people.

A scholar, an educator, and an author, Erena has worked to liberate the Oromo people, the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, from government oppression. In doing so, he became a target.

In June of 2014, while Erena was working with other scholars to develop curricula for the Oromia Education Bureau, government agents stormed in, took their photos, and demanded they stop working on the project. A few days later, Erena was forced into a car and driven to the notorious Maekelawi prison, where many Oromo activists are tortured.

This was but one of six incidents that year in which Erena was stalked, arrested, and beaten by government agents.

A year after the initial threats from the government, his doctoral program funding was discontinued because of his "inappropriate" research agenda.

Following his academic suspension, he received an email from Harvard Law student Kulani Jalata, an American student of Oromo descent, who had heard of his plight. She wanted to nominate Erena for Harvard SAR. Erena was initially skeptical. He said, "I looked it up and I was amazed. Is that from enemy, maybe from the government to cheat me?"

Erena took a chance, and with Jalata's help, applied to the program and was accepted. He benefitted from the period of calm surrounding President Barack Obama's official visit to Ethiopia in 2015 and was able to flee the country.

## **LIFE AT HARVARD**

"People have come from situations of intimidation, extortion, torture, persecution, but they're for the most part, not coming with an edge of bitterness but with a sense of hope," Greenblatt said. This certainly holds true for Hariri and Erena.

While at Harvard, fellows often research and raise awareness about the issues plaguing their countries.

Unrue explained that protecting these scholars is the top priority, and that every case is unique. "We work with them to make as many connections for them as we can," she said.

Hariri, hosted by the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, has dedicated his year to analyzing hospital data and disease prevalence during the war and continuing to build out his medical school.

From producing online courses for Syrian medical students and educators to acquiring support materials and funding for the school, Hariri likens himself to an octopus in



“connecting people from different places and trying to put all of these resources in one basket.” In a consortium across universities including Yale and Albany, he facilitates collaboration on initiatives related to the medical school project.

Hariri said he works more than 20 hours per day, often waking up at 3 a.m. because of the time difference between Cambridge and Turkey and Syria. “Believe me, there is no time for rest,” he said.

Hosted by the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research, Erena’s research focused on “The Oromo Student Protest Movement: Demands for Justice and Democracy in the Face of Ethiopian Government.” In addition to teaching an Oromo language class at Harvard, he also wrote 152 poems in English to try to improve his command of the language. He said he was excited to come to Harvard given its wealth of academic resources.



Beekan Erena in the library of The Hutchins Center for African & African American Research, which hosted him as a Scholars at Risk Fellow last year. SARAH WU

“When I came here, I saw 17 of my books in the library. I don’t know how they came to Harvard, but I appreciate Harvard because it is globally collecting every nation’s book. I was amazed,” Erena said. He was happy to find himself in “an ocean of knowledge.”

With government-controlled media, there are many untold stories in Ethiopia. Erena hopes to raise awareness of these stories through his academic work, creative writing, and thousands of social media followers.

But for some fellows, rest and recovery are needed after escaping traumatic circumstances.

From receiving legal aid and psychological treatment to forming academic networks, Greenblatt hopes scholars have “a kind of world that is giving them some support and that they’re not just in a dark hole.”

While some SAR fellows openly interact with the Harvard affiliates, others cannot be identified in the same way out of safety concerns. Unrue said that being called a scholar at risk can be “a problematic label—maybe like dissident.”

As she does with many fellows seeking academic or research positions following their fellowship, Unrue is now helping Erena apply to doctoral programs in the United States. Erena currently teaches literature courses on revolution and survival at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, with the broader goal of eventually returning to Ethiopia and creating social change through education and his writing.

“My dream is to be voice for the African people wherever I am. If my country is appropriate for intellectuals, my wish is to go back and teach the generation, especially to work on their minds,” Erena said.

## BEYOND THE PROGRAM

Harvard’s Scholars at Risk chapter relies on funding from a variety of sources, but with an unstable stream of funding, sustainability is a key concern of the program—even as administrators voice their continued belief in the importance of the program.

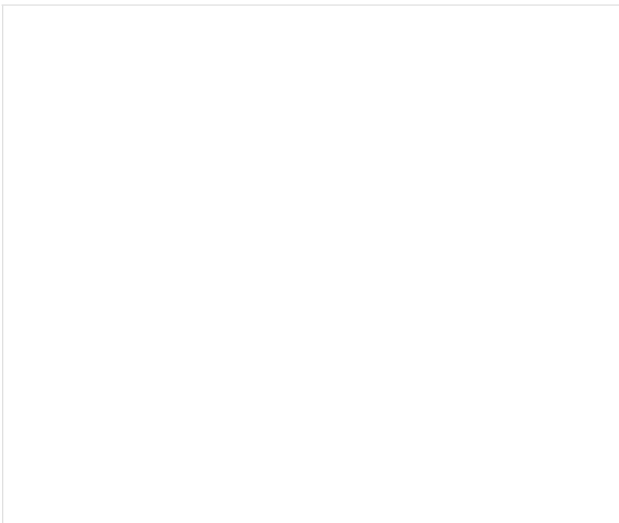
In a recent email soliciting nominations for next year’s class of Scholars at Risk, University Provost Alan M. Garber ’76 wrote, “The support of American universities for scholars facing persecution because of their beliefs, scholarship, or identities has always been critically important. With threats to academic freedom rising across the globe, this support has only grown in importance.”

Over the past year, the Turkish government has exercised more control over educators and China’s president has sought to remove dissenting opinion in universities.

“Critical thinking is an activity absolutely supported by universities, or should be supported, but at times, that makes them targets for attack. Our professional networks should do what we can to help people,” Trumpener said.

Greenblatt said that, while the funding may fluctuate, Harvard SAR will continue to push for support.

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“The University has been very generous and serious about this for now quite a few years, but the university budgets are under pressure. We know that,” Greenblatt said. “I’ve had and expect to have many conversations [with administrators] but it’s sometimes disheartening to realize that you have to go back so often to make the appeal and say look this is the situation we’re in as human beings, these are the people who are making claims on us.”

Upperclassman residential Houses also started hosting fellows two years ago, which has significantly decreased housing costs and provided an outlet for scholars interested in engaging with the undergraduate population, according to Unrue.

This past October, comedian Jimmy Kimmel joined sports personality Bill Simmons in an benefit show for the Harvard program.

“Jimmy has been a great angel for our program over the years,” Unrue said.

Bhabha said she is grateful for the generosity of supporters outside of and within the university, but internal funding remains a challenge.

“We have had gifts, and we have had donations, but I think when you’re at Harvard, people expect the wealthy university to support something like this,” she said.

From working on fundraising initiatives to helping scholars rebuild their lives, fellows and colleagues view Unrue as the undersung heroine of the program.

“She’s a force of nature, and she’s also a force for good,” Greenblatt said.

—Staff writer Sarah Wu can be reached at [sarah.wu@thecrimson.com](mailto:sarah.wu@thecrimson.com). Follow her on Twitter [@SarahWuhooo](https://twitter.com/SarahWuhooo).

*This article has been revised to reflect the following corrections:*

#### **CORRECTIONS: December 14, 2016**

A previous version of this article incorrectly stated that Mahmoud Hariri established a consortium across multiple universities including Brigman to collaborate on initiatives related to the medical school project. In fact, he is a moderator of the project and Brigman is not part of the consortium.

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RECOMMENDED ARTICLES

## DuBois Institute Names 23 Research Fellows

Harvard's W.E.B. DuBois Institute for Afro-American Research yesterday named 23 scholars as resident fellows for this academic year, according to

## Death of Professor Polleus.

Louis Polleus, professor of French at Dartmouth College, died of heart disease on Saturday. Professor Polleus was considered one of

## Review of Monthly by Prof. Harris

Under the title of "The White Bear of Norway," Mr. H.G. Leach gives a somewhat journalese account of Bjornson and

## WELCOME TO M. JUSSE RAND

The fourth annual dinner of the Cosmopolitan Club was held in the Trophy Room of the Union last evening. D.

## Scholars at Risk

"Will I be safer?" Birtukan Midekssa echoes. She lets out a laugh, pauses, then shakes her head, but her wide smile doesn't flicker. "I don't know," she says. "Honestly."

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## Cara has supported academics at risk and defended science and learning for over eighty years. Our early work helped rescue many of the 20th century's finest minds.

Cara's roots go back to 1933, and the Nazis' expulsion of many leading academics from Germany's universities. Over eighty years on, Cara is still working to help at-risk academics facing discrimination, persecution, suffering and violence around the world, and to advance education by supporting academics and their educational institutions whose continuing work is at risk or compromised.

While travelling in Austria in April 1933, William Beveridge, then the Director of the London School of Economics, learned of the Nazi authorities' decree, dismissing many leading academics from German

universities on racial and political grounds. He returned to the UK and set about enlisting the support of prominent academics, scientists and others for an urgent rescue mission. The Academic Assistance Council (AAC) was launched in May. Its **founding statement** (<http://cara.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Cara-Founding-Statement.pdf>) appealed for "means to prevent the waste of exceptional abilities exceptionally trained". The Nobel Prize-winning chemist and physicist Ernest Rutherford was chosen as the first President. A V Hill, another Nobel Prize-winning scientist, and later also Cambridge University MP, became Vice-President.

The AAC's founders, supported by the redoubtable Esther ('Tess') Simpson, threw themselves into their new task. The AAC was one of four organisations who came together as the 'Refugee Assistance Fund' in October 1933 to hold a major fundraising event at the Royal Albert Hall. In his **last public speech** (<http://www.cara.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Einstein-Speech-Albert-Hall-331003.pdf>) in Europe before leaving for the USA, Albert Einstein urged his audience to stand up for intellectual and individual freedom: "If we want to resist the powers which threaten to suppress intellectual and individual freedom we must keep clearly before us what is at stake, and what we owe to that freedom which our ancestors have won for us after hard struggles. Without such freedom, there would have been no Shakespeare, no Goethe, no Newton, no Pasteur and no Lister ... Most people would lead a dull life of slavery ... It is only men who are free who create the inventions and intellectual works which to us moderns make life worthwhile."

Who We Are

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By 1936, it was clear that a new, more formal, structure was needed to take over the AAC's work. Rutherford explained the rationale in an open letter in 'Science' (Vol 83, No 2155, 17 April 1936): "The council hoped that its work might be required for only a temporary period, but is now convinced that there is need for a permanent body to assist scholars who are victims of political and religious persecutions. The devastation of the German universities still continues; not only university teachers of Jewish descent, but many others who are regarded as "politically unreliable" are being prevented from making their contribution to the common cause of scholarship."

As a result, he announced the creation of a permanent successor, the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning (SPSL). In a joint letter on the same page, Albert Einstein, Erwin Schrödinger and Vladimir Tchernavin paid tribute to the work of the AAC in its three short years: "The warm sympathy extended to all who approached the Academic Assistance Council has helped in hundreds of cases ... The Academic Assistance Council is coming to an end in its emergency form, but we and our friends will endeavor to make it remain unforgotten. May we hope that the continuation of our scientific work – helped in no small measure by its activities – will be an expression of our gratitude?"

Between 1933 and 1939, the AAC/SPSL raised £100,000 from donors and universities, the equivalent of some £4 million today, and used it to support individuals, and their families, with grants and advice while they found new posts in universities in the UK or in other safe countries. A number of the AAC's founders and Council members also personally provided places and/or funds to help individual academics; and the AAC was closely involved in the successful effort in 1933 to bring to London the Warburg Institute art library, which had been proscribed by the Nazis, and six of its staff. In, all some two thousand people were saved, and helped to build new lives. Sixteen won Nobel Prizes; eighteen were knighted; over one hundred became Fellows of The Royal Society or The British Academy. Their contribution to British scientific, intellectual and cultural life was enormous. To give just a few examples: **Ernst Chain**, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, 1945; **Hans Krebs**, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, 1953; **Max Born**, Nobel Prize in Physics, 1954; **Max Perutz**, Nobel Prize in Chemistry, 1962; **Lise Meitner**, celebrated nuclear physicist; **Nikolaus Pevsner**, architectural historian and author; **Marthe Vogt**, prominent neuroscientist; **Geoffrey Elton** (born Gottfried Ehrenberg), Tudor historian and philosopher of history; **Ernst Gombrich**, the notable art historian, who was able to work as a Warburg Institute research fellow in London; **Karl Popper**, political and social philosopher; **Ludwig Guttmann**, neurologist at Stoke Mandeville, 'father' of the Paralympic movement. It was a unique effort; there was no parallel elsewhere in Europe. At a commemorative event at the House of Lords in 2012, Mrs Eva Loeffler, Sir Ludwig Guttmann's daughter, warmly thanked Cara for its vital role in obtaining visas for her family and for giving her father a grant to support his needs and to enable him to continue his research at the Radcliffe Infirmary in Oxford. Without Cara's help, she said, they would all have perished in the Nazi concentration camps. Instead, her father's dream of the Paralympics had come true.

The SPSL's work continued even after the Second World War had come to an end. Beveridge wrote in his *A Defence of Free Learning* (1959) that "although Hitler was dead, intolerance was not", and concluded that "continued needs and the possible future crises" rendered the Society's

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services as necessary as ever, in Europe and across the world. In the 1940s and 1950s, the SPSL helped many academics seeking refuge from the Stalinist regimes in the USSR and Eastern Europe. As time passed, the SPSL's focus expanded, to include, among others, those fleeing the apartheid regime in South Africa and juntas in Chile and Argentina. (One of the most prominent South African exiles, whom the SPSL helped in 1966 and again in 1988, was the anti-apartheid leader Albie Sachs, later a Justice in the South African Constitutional Court under Nelson Mandela. In 2012, he wrote of the importance of Cara's work: "My story has been repeated a thousand times and more, with different details, but the same theme. An intellectual driven from his or her homeland by repression and intolerance, enabled by Cara to share ideas and values with welcoming hosts, improving skills ... Through living the principles of free enquiry we become natural apostles of peace and understanding and of internationalism at its best. Cara does more than provide succour for people in need. It helps keep alive the spirit of free enquiry."

More recently, Cara's focus has shifted to the Middle East, particularly Iraq and now Syria, and to troubled regions of Africa, helping hundreds of academics at risk to escape to places of safety through its **Fellowship Programme** (<http://www.cara.ngo/what-we-do/a-lifeline-to-academics-at-risk/>). In addition, Cara has developed and run **regional programmes** (<http://www.cara.ngo/what-we-do/supporting-higher-education-in-crisis/>) to support academics and their institutions.

In 1999 the SPSL changed its name to the Council for Assisting Refugee Academics (Cara). This was modified again in 2014 to become the Council for At-Risk Academics, reflecting the fact that Cara helps many who are at great risk but do not see themselves as 'refugees', and instead still hope to return to their home countries when conditions allow.

(<http://www.cara.ngo/who-we-are/our-history/>)

**"A society which respects and cherishes the freedom of its academic institutions and their members is much less likely to fall victim to the enemies of freedom in general than a society which does not. Without freedom, how little of what happens on this planet has ultimate moral significance?"**

Lord Robbins, President of The Royal Society,  
1966



**Subject:** Saving lives, voices, and ideas

**From:** Sarah Willcox, IIE Scholar Rescue Fund <philanthropy@iie.org>

**Date:** 6/7/17, 2:08 PM

**To:** <lebowitz@math.rutgers.edu>

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Dear Joel L.,

Dr. Ikoni Ogaji of Nigeria is working to reduce the cost of crucial medicines to make them accessible across the developing world.

This work nearly came to a halt a few years ago, when Dr. Ogaji was in profound danger after violent clashes erupted between ethnic groups in his city. A fellowship grant and support from [IIE's Scholar Rescue Fund](#) enabled him to continue his research in safety in Kenya.

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**“The IIE-SRF fellowship brought relief to my family and myself from the trauma and tension of the crisis that engulfed our city. We were able to put our lives together again.”**

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Eventually Dr. Ogaji was able to return home, where he is a leading authority on drug production and teaches hundreds of students each semester, enhancing the future of pharmaceutical research.

**Dr. Ogaji has touched many lives. As a supporter of IIE, so can you.** Your generosity makes the IIE Scholar Rescue Fund a beacon of hope for scholars around the world who face threats of persecution and violence.

The number of academics in jeopardy today is unprecedented. We must protect

them, or the cost to the world – in innovation, freedom of inquiry, and the transfer of knowledge to the next generation – will be grave. A more peaceful and prosperous future for all of us depends on them, **and on you.**

Your support enables these scholars to live and work in safety. Please [make a gift](#) to IIE-SRF today so that we can continue this vital work.

## Donate Now

With gratitude,



Sarah Willcox  
Director, IIE Scholar Rescue Fund

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## Graduate student in engineering granted presidential pardon in Sudan



On May 11, 2017, Sudanese engineering graduate student Abdulmonem Abdumawla was granted a pardon by Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir and released after more than 500 days in prison.

Mr. Abdumawla is a human rights defender, who has publicly criticized rights violations in his country, including abuses involving Sudan's minority Christian community. He was arrested in December 2015 by Sudanese authorities and detained incommunicado and without charge prior to his transfer to Al Huda Prison in Omdurman in August 2016. He was later charged with various national security-related offenses, for which no evidence was presented. After a trial marred by procedural

irregularities, Mr. Abdumawla was convicted and sentenced in January 2017 to 12 years in prison.

The CHR appealed to high-level Sudanese officials for Mr. Abdumawla's release from prison on the grounds that he was arrested and convicted for his peaceful exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, association, and religion.

### CHR Needs Your Support

Science flourishes when human rights and dignity are respected. By protecting and defending the rights of persecuted scientists worldwide, the CHR also promotes scientific progress and equitable access to its benefits. To continue this unique and vital work, the CHR needs your support. [Please make a generous gift.](#)

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