

SEPTEMBER 2018



# ENGAGING WITH HUMAN RIGHTS

IN THE NATIONAL  
ACADEMY CONTEXT

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A RESOURCE GUIDE BY  
THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK  
OF ACADEMIES AND SCHOLARLY SOCIETIES

# ABOUT US

The [INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK OF ACADEMIES AND SCHOLARLY SOCIETIES \(H.R. NETWORK\)](#) is an international consortium of honorary societies in the sciences, engineering, and medicine with a shared interest in human rights. Created in 1993, the H.R. Network is governed by an Executive Committee [composed of academy members from 12 countries](#).

The H.R. Network advocates in support of colleagues suffering human rights abuses, promotes the free exchange of ideas among scientists and scholars, and supports the independence and autonomy of national academies and scholarly societies worldwide.

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## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

National academies throughout the world, despite differences in structure and mandate, are based around a membership of individuals recognized for outstanding contributions to knowledge. They provide a critical voice on issues related to science and technology and are commonly at the forefront of efforts to address pressing national and global concerns on issues such as food security, climate change, and sustainable development.

Though not widely recognized, many academies regularly engage with human rights, e.g., by exploring the relationship between science, technology, and rights; appealing for justice in science-related human rights cases; and marshaling assistance in the wake of human rights crises.

Why are academies involved with issues of rights? One reason is that, to a great extent, their work is concerned with improving the lives of individuals, and engagement with internationally recognized human rights norms is vital in thinking about what it means to improve human life. In some cases, as where academies grapple with the opportunities and risks presented by new technologies, academies can also contribute to societal understanding of rights, which is continually growing and evolving in response to new challenges.

Engagement with human rights standards is also important for academies seeking to provide assistance for colleagues suffering severe ill-treatment and respond to broader issues of abuse and discrimination related to research and scholarship. In such situations, academies and their members

frequently issue appeals grounded in international human rights law, for example where colleagues have been imprisoned for their professional work or the peaceful expression of their views and where gender or religion has led to certain groups of individuals being excluded from higher education.

Finally and most fundamentally, through their concern for human rights academies reaffirm the fundamental principles on which their work, and that of the global scientific enterprise, relies. As Einstein famously observed, “everything that is really great and inspiring is created by the individual who can labor in freedom”, and in the absence of basic freedoms—such as the right to speak openly without fear of reprisal and the right to collaborate freely with others—academies would be poorer bodies indeed.

This resource guide highlights the diverse and changing ways in which academies around the world are integrating human rights activities into their work. It examines, in particular, the following:

- Human Rights Dialogue and Research
- Appeals Concerning Human Rights Violations
- Assistance Following Conflict and Human Rights Abuse

A special section of the resource guide examines the growing involvement of academies and their members in helping to address the human rights challenges facing refugees through dialogue, research, and assistance for refugee scholars.

There is no single “right” approach to engaging with human rights in the academy context. In practice, academies structure their human rights activities in different ways—both in terms of the substantive issues that they choose to take up and how they organize these activities. The aim of this resource guide is to highlight ongoing, inspiring work in this area and to serve as a resource for academies wishing to become more involved with human rights issues. The resource guide is part of a larger project of the [International Human Rights Network of Academies and Scholarly Societies \(H.R. Network\)](#) to collect and share information on the evolving human rights work of national academies. More information on this project, which is generously funded by the Richard Lounsbery Foundation, can be found on the website of the H.R. Network, where academies are encouraged to share updated information.

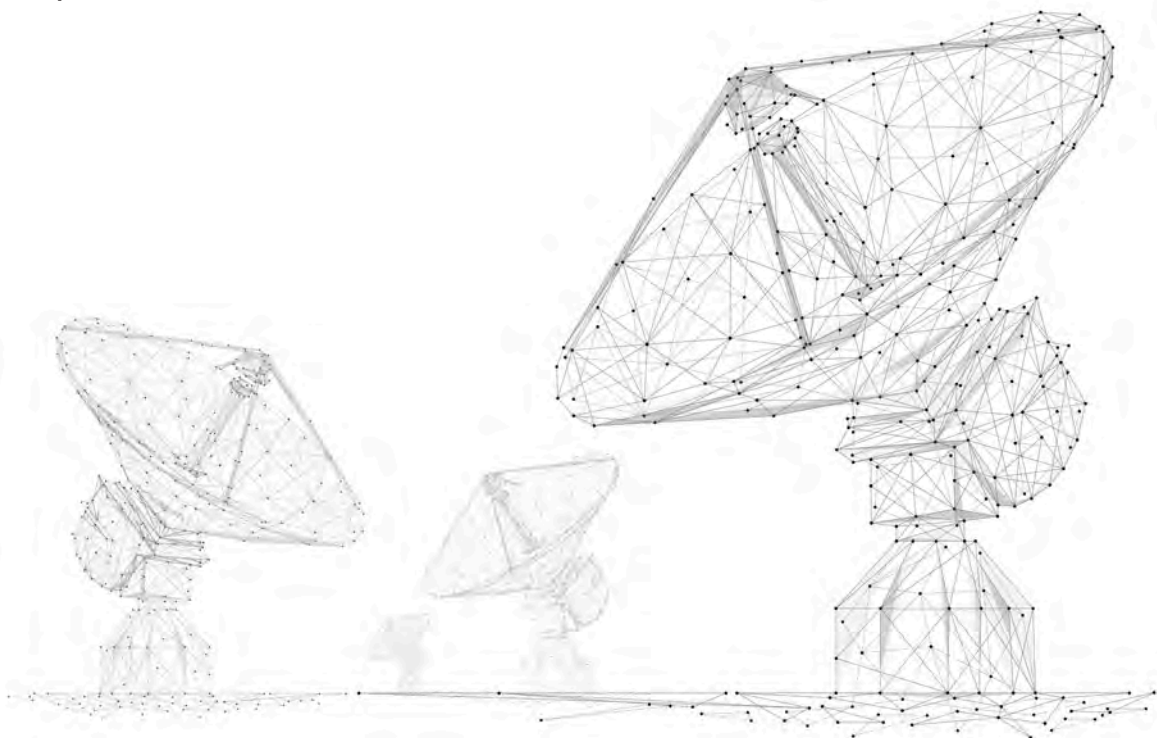
Academy members need not be human rights experts in order to contribute to

the vibrant global discussion on human rights, speak out against human rights abuses, or provide help to individuals in need, and this resource guide provides information about organizations that are able to provide relevant advice and assistance to interested academies. I hope that it will be useful to you as you consider your academy’s role in promoting human rights, both in your own country and globally.

Rebecca Everly

Executive Director

International Human Rights Network  
of Academies and Scholarly Societies



# WHAT ARE HUMAN RIGHTS?

“Human rights” are rights that belong to all people, without discrimination, by virtue of their humanity. First set out as rights to be universally protected in the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights \(UDHR\)](#), they have antecedents in the national laws of many countries.

The UDHR was adopted in 1948 by the United Nations General Assembly in response to the horrors of the Second World War. Drafted by a committee composed of individuals from a range of cultural and legal backgrounds, it emphasizes the “inherent dignity and...equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family” and recognizes both those rights commonly referred to as *civil and political rights* (e.g., the right to life, freedom of expression, and privacy) and those referred to as *economic, social and cultural rights* (e.g., the rights to education, health, water and sanitation)—which are understood to be indivisible and interdependent.

Although the UDHR is a declaration rather than a treaty, it is regarded as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and nations, and many rights contained in the UDHR are considered *customary international law* binding on all states. The rights contained in the UDHR have also been fleshed out in numerous international and regional instruments, including legally binding human rights treaties such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and a range of more specialized treaties. For reference, the annex to this resource guide contains links to major international and regional human rights treaties and to databases listing state parties to such treaties.

By becoming party to human rights treaties, states obligate themselves to abide by

the treaties’ provisions, with their specific obligations falling into three categories:

- **The obligation to respect:** “refrain from interfering with or curtailing the enjoyment of human rights”
- **The obligation to protect:** “protect individuals and groups against human rights abuses”
- **The obligation to fulfill:** “take positive action to facilitate the enjoyment of basic human rights” (United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner, [International Human Rights Law](#))

The international human rights system takes into account that the full realization of certain rights may take time. Thus, for example, Article 2(1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) obligates States to take steps to the maximum of their available resources to achieve progressively the full realization of economic, social and cultural rights, including the rights to health and education. However, even in connection with rights that may be progressively realized, the obligation on States to “take steps” is immediate. States are also immediately obliged to ensure that these rights can be enjoyed without discrimination.

The nature of States’ human rights obligations is subject to continual clarification by human rights tribunals and complaint mechanisms, including those listed in the annex of this resource guide. For academics interested in learning about State obligations in reference to specific rights, the [information provided](#) by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights provides a useful starting point.

Academies may contact the Secretariat of the [H.R. Network](#) for more information.

# STRUCTURING HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVITIES

National academies structure their human rights activities in different ways. Of the more than 80 academies that have participated in the H.R. Network (honorary societies in the sciences, engineering, and medicine), approximately one-fourth report having a formal human rights

committee (or representation on a human rights committee shared by other academies within the same country, as in the case of those academies grouped together below).

## ACADEMIES (H.R. NETWORK PARTICIPANTS) WITH FORMAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEES:

- National Academy of Sciences of Costa Rica
- Danish Academy of Technical Sciences
- Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters
- Danish Academy of Natural Sciences
- Council of Finnish Academies
- French Academy of Sciences
- German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina
- Korean Academy of Science and Technology
- Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences
- Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters
- Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts
- Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities
- Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences
- Young Academy of Sweden\*
- Science Academy/Bilim Akademisi (Turkey)
- Academy of Medical Sciences (U.K.)
- British Academy for the Humanities and Social Sciences
- Royal Academy of Engineering (U.K.)
- Royal Society (U.K.)
- Royal Society of Edinburgh
- U.S. National Academy of Engineering
- U.S. National Academy of Medicine
- U.S. National Academy of Sciences

\* The Swedish Academy is also represented on the Swedish Human Rights Committee but, as a non-science academy, it is not a H.R. Network participant.

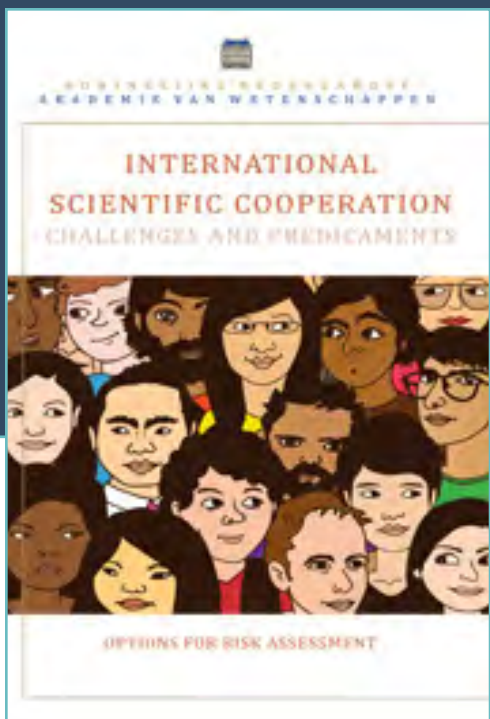
National academy human rights committees, composed of academy members, vary in size—ranging from four members, in the case of the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters, to 16 members in the case of the [French Academy of Sciences](#).

In the case of human rights committees shared by several academies in the same country, members are drawn from participating academies. For instance, the five U.K. national academies—the Royal Society, the British Academy for the Humanities and Social Sciences, the Royal Academy of Engineering, the Academy of Medical Sciences, and the Royal Society of Edinburgh—are each able to nominate up to two members for the [U.K. Academies Human Rights Committee](#).

Often with assistance from academy staff and information provided by the H.R. Network, human rights committees worldwide undertake a wide range of human rights activities. This typically includes appealing for justice in cases involving colleagues suffering serious human rights abuses, for instance through letters, statements, meetings with government officials,

and, more occasionally, visits to the countries concerned (some academies specifically focus on researchers under threat, or colleagues who are suffering abuses in connection with their scientific work). As indicated above, academies are also commonly involved in other human rights activities, including dialogue and research on human rights themes. For a flavor of these different types of activities, the website of the [Swedish Academies' Human Rights Committee](#) is instructive.

Even where academies have formal human rights committees, other bodies and individuals within the academies are often involved with human rights issues. In some situations, (e.g., in the [Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts](#)), the academies' leadership issues appeals in response to cases of human rights concern upon the recommendation of their human rights committees. There have been many cases in which both an academy's president and its human rights committee have spoken out in response to human rights abuses. Human rights committees also regularly encourage their academies' membership to become involved in responding to rights-related issues.



Several academy human rights committees have produced publications on issues related to science and human rights. View a [booklet](#) developed by the [Standing Committee for the Freedom of Scientific Pursuit](#) of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences concerning the benefits and challenges of international scientific cooperation.

Finally, although formal human rights committees can be very helpful for promoting and protecting human rights, and for raising awareness of pressing human rights topics within their academies, many academies without such committees, and members of those academies, are nonetheless also active



in addressing human rights issues, often in consultation with the H.R. Network. To take only a few examples:

- The [Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences](#) have a Delegate for Human Rights who “works at the interface between science and human rights”, responding to violations involving colleagues and holding conferences on topics involving the connection between human rights and scholarship.
- In India, a “Committee of Elders” consisting of several past presidents of the three science academies (i.e., Indian Academy of Sciences; National Academy of Sciences, India; and the Indian National Science Academy) was [formed in 2012](#) following the wrongful imprisonment of an Indian health professional. The Committee’s charge is to “take up issues related to the

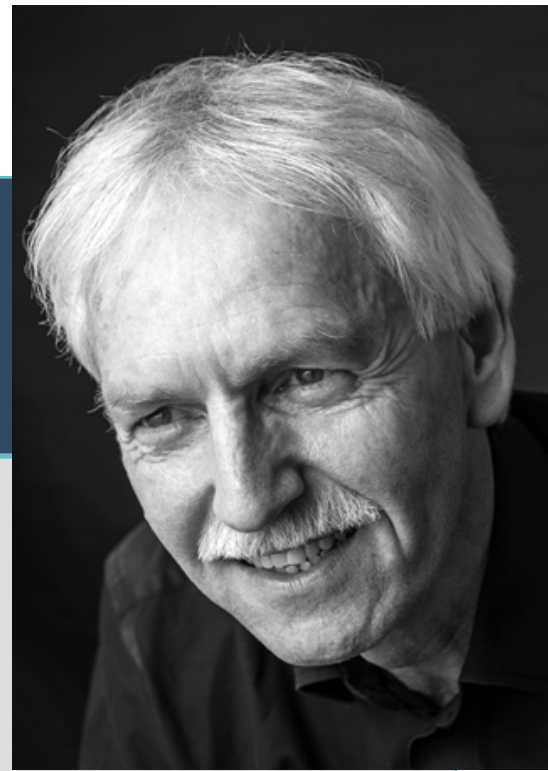
rights of scientists and other intellectual workers.”

- Several members of the National Academy of Sciences of Sri Lanka are involved in identifying and responding to cases of human rights concern in consultation with civil society actors and the H.R. Network. Through the efforts of former Sri Lankan Academy President Arjuna Aluwihare, the Academy also hosted the [eighth biennial meeting](#) of the H.R. Network in April 2007.

Academies’ human rights activities, whether or not undertaken through human rights committees, are international in character. It is important to note, however, that many academies have engaged with the governments of their own countries on domestic rights-related issues. Examples of this, and other types of involvement with human rights, are provided in the pages that follow.



Participants of the eighth biennial meeting of the H.R. Network hosted by the National Academy of Sciences of Sri Lanka.



## NORWEGIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCE & LETTERS' HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

### INTERVIEW WITH JAKOB LOTHE

Jakob Lothe is a member of the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters and Chair of the Academy's Human Rights Committee. The four-member Committee was established to support the independence of academies around the world and to defend the human rights of scientists, students, and others, including health workers and engineers. The Committee works for the release of individuals who have been imprisoned in violation of their human rights and to prevent torture and use of the death penalty. It also works to raise awareness within the Norwegian Academy concerning human rights abuses.

In an interview with the H.R. Network's Secretariat, Dr. Lothe shared why he believes the work of his Committee, and that of other national academies working to address human rights concerns, is so important.

#### 1) Why should academies care about human rights?

There are two primary but related responses to this question. First, it is essential for academies of sciences or humanities to operate in a free society. Without basic civil and human rights it is very difficult to conduct research; researchers need to address topics without the interference of the authorities. Second, researchers have an ethical obligation to support those who cannot conduct their research freely. Those of us living in free societies ought not to take for granted the freedom to carry out our work and should remain conscious of the fact that others around the world struggle under enormous constraints to conduct their research and, sometimes, to maintain their livelihoods and personal freedom.

#### 2) What types of activities can academies do to raise awareness concerning the links between science, technology, health, and human rights?

Writing both public and private letters of appeal to heads of state concerning individual cases of at-risk scientists, students, teachers, and others can be very influential. I think government authorities are impacted by such letters, especially when academies write. We have seen improvements in a number of cases that we have raised. Academies can also highlight human rights issues and thereby strengthen the profile of these issues. The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters' Human Rights Committee has arranged seminars that focused on the topic of research and human rights. A seminar held in December 2013, in cooperation with the national academies of Sweden, Denmark, and Finland, addressed human rights concerns relating to the death penalty and the Holocaust.

Attendees also discussed the question of what academies of science can do to promote human rights and were introduced to the work of the International Human Rights Network of Academies and Scholarly Societies. A follow-up seminar, held in December 2015, featured 14 distinguished scholars hailing from varying disciplines who discussed how human rights issues present themselves within their respective disciplines. While there proved to be a significant overlap of relevant issues, the discussion demonstrated that there are interesting differences between the ways in which human rights issues emerge, become important, and can even challenge the approach of other disciplines.

### 3) What special role can the scientific and scholarly communities play in advancing human rights?

When an academy promotes human rights, it has a certain weight or authority. Academies can speak to the connection between human rights and scientific prosperity; they have a unique knowledge, rooted in scientific research, of the importance of human rights.

### 4) Why do you think it's important for national academies and scholarly societies to collaborate on human rights issues of concern?

Collaboration is absolutely crucial. With a united stance comes added weight to one's voice. It becomes a common concern. If a country, for political reasons, does not listen to its own researchers, it will be in dire straits. Human history has shown that countries that do not respect the work and expertise of their scientific and academic communities do not do well. Having a collective voice, or community of academics, lends strength to one's cause and allows one to become more effective. It is crucial that each joint initiative is based on facts and is consistent in its message. The stronger the collaboration, the better for the promotion of human rights.

### 5) What are the lessons learned from your work with the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters' Human Rights Committee? Or from your work with the International Human Rights Network of Academies and Scholarly Societies?

I have become more convinced of the necessity of this work and am humbled by the experience of colleagues who have encountered difficulties. I believe solidarity is essential among the international research community to improve knowledge and life conditions. Moreover, the free exercise of scientific research is needed to address societal challenges, such as climate change and issues of health. The scientific community needs to be better at highlighting these issues and making the link with human rights. We need to convince other academies to engage and become more active in this work. While private appeals are important, we need to become more publicly active as well. Human rights can be seen as abstract, especially to those who live in more privileged societies. The scientific and academic communities can do much to highlight tangible examples of the intersection between human rights and science.



# SPOTLIGHT

## NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, COSTA RICA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

The National Academy of Sciences of Costa Rica (ANC) maintains a formal human rights committee and is an active member of the H.R. Network. Costa Rica prides itself on its human rights record, inspired by the historic abolition of the military forces in 1948 and the Central American peace agreements of the late 1980s, which led to Oscar Arias, former President of Costa Rica, being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1987. Originally created over 12 years ago, the Committee was re-launched in 2016 after a meeting of the H.R. Network in Panama. During this meeting, participants agreed that academies in Central and South America should set up committees to alert one another to human rights violations in the region. ANC's Committee consists of 9 people, all of whom are currently members of the ANC, including the President of ANC, who serves in an ex officio capacity. The Committee prepares letters of appeal regarding issues of human rights concern, on its own initiative and in response to alerts from the H.R. Network.



# APPEALS CONCERNING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

National academies and their members have a long and distinguished history of appealing for justice in response to serious human rights violations with a connection to science, engineering, medicine, and scholarship. They perform a special role in such cases, as globally respected organizations and individuals speaking out on rights-related concerns with a link to their work. Academies frequently issue appeals (public, private, or both) in cases involving colleagues who are arbitrarily detained or subjected to other forms of ill-treatment as a result of practicing their professions. For example, they have supported individuals from the following professions who have come under threat:

- statisticians who have stood firm against government attempts to manipulate statistics for political gain;
- forensic anthropologists whose excavation of mass grave sites and identification of human remains has revealed government atrocities; and
- health professionals who have provided needed care, in accordance with ethical standards of medical practice, to marginalized or opposition groups.

Many academies also appeal for the just treatment of professional colleagues who come under threat due to the peaceful expression of their opinions or their exercise of other internationally recognized rights. Because scientists, engineers, health professionals, and scholars are often opinion leaders within their societies, governments can be quick to silence and punish them for views perceived as critical of official policy. Government attacks against

these communities sometimes serve as a means of intimidating the wider public.

Finally, academies often respond to broader rights-related issues of concern (e.g., discrimination and restrictions on freedom of movement) that threaten the principles underlying their work. In situations involving widespread human rights abuse, academies and institutions of higher learning are sometimes subjected to physical attacks and assaults on their independence. Academies around the world regularly speak out against such actions.

Academies learn of cases and issues of concern from various sources, including their own members, the H.R. Network, and other members of the global academic community. Their responses also take different forms—e.g., letters of appeal, petitions, meetings with government/international officials, and submissions to human rights complaint bodies (including those listed in the annex to this resource guide). By responding to human rights abuse, they:

- send a message to rights abusers that their conduct is being scrutinized;
- raise domestic, regional, and international awareness of human rights violations; and
- promote answerability for rights violations, where academies pressure rights abusers to account for their conduct.

In individual cases of abuse, appeals from academies help ensure that colleagues under threat, and their families, know that they are not forgotten. Support for colleagues can also have far-reaching implications for the many

individuals whose lives are impacted by their work.

Finally, decades of academy involvement in responding to rights abuses have shown that

sustained pressure—to include appeals for justice by academies and their members—is often followed by advances in human rights protection, from the release of imprisoned colleagues to policy change.

“ We need the support of the international community. We need to feel that there are people behind us. It is a moral support. It is not tangible but it has a deep meaning in the heart. It has something, even when you close your eyes you see people who you haven't seen, you imagine their shapes, but they are holding your hand continually. ”

- Engineer and former prisoner of conscience. Released in August 2017 after nearly 9 months in arbitrary detention.



# SPOTLIGHT

## FRENCH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

### STANDING COMMITTEE FOR THE DEFENCE OF SCIENTISTS' RIGHTS



[G.Blot - RMN/Institut de France]

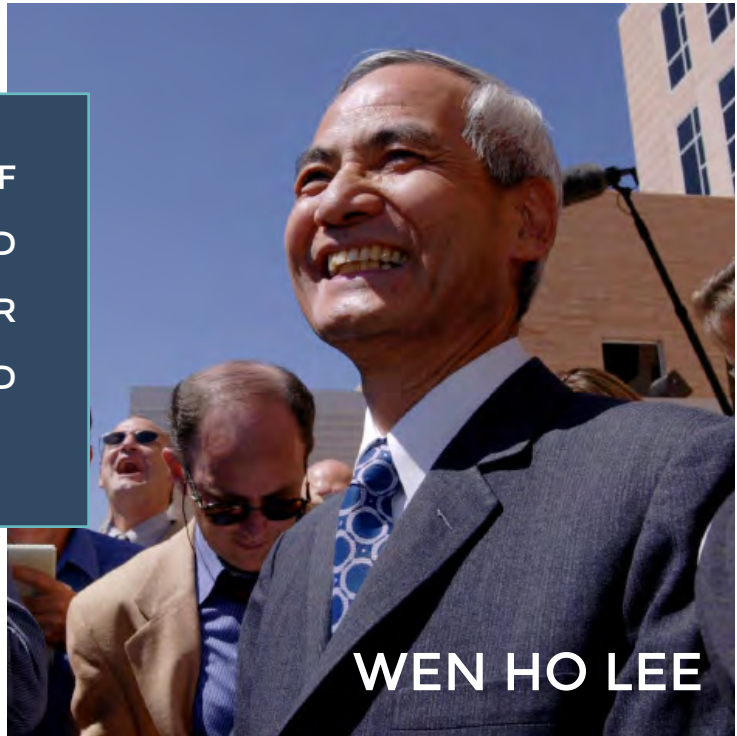
The *Standing Committee for the Defence of Scientists' Rights (CODHOS)* of the French Academy of Sciences celebrates its 40th anniversary in 2018. In accordance with the statutes of the French Academy, CODHOS examines violations of rights involving scientists, physicians, researchers in human and social sciences, engineers, and students anywhere in the world. The Committee takes actions to gain the release of imprisoned colleagues, help improve their conditions of confinement in the interim, and, where possible, facilitate their return to their professional work. Over the years CODHOS has appealed for justice in the cases of hundreds of colleagues, including individuals

targeted for their research and individuals who have spoken out about injustice and human rights violations in their societies.

In one such case, CODHOS took a number of actions in support of a scientist imprisoned for raising a serious public health concern in his country that he believed was not being adequately addressed by the government. The Committee directly intervened on several occasions with officials in that country to call for the scientist's release and, over the years, to request prompt action in response to harsh treatment of the scientist in prison. In conjunction with a press conference organized by bodies seeking to raise public awareness of the case, CODHOS issued a statement that was shared with journalists. CODHOS also raised its concerns with the academy of sciences in the country concerned, including through an in-person meeting by a CODHOS member together with the French Ambassador. The scientist was ultimately freed, after serving four years of an eight-year sentence.

As a participant in the H.R. Network, CODHOS has also—through its endorsement of public statements by the H.R. Network's Executive Committee—addressed broader issues of pressing human rights concern, including the importance of respecting rights when responding to terrorism, the principle of medical neutrality, and the need for an end to assaults on academic freedom worldwide.

## U.S. NATIONAL ACADEMIES OF SCIENCES, ENGINEERING, AND MEDICINE PUBLICLY CALL FOR FAIR TREATMENT OF DETAINED U.S. SCIENTIST



WEN HO LEE

In August 2000, the presidents of the U.S. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine wrote publicly to the country's Attorney General to

express concern about the case of Dr. Wen Ho Lee, a Taiwan-born U.S. scientist detained under harsh conditions based on suspicions that he had provided U.S. secrets to China. The presidents decided to take public action after their private letters failed to elicit a satisfactory response. Their letter expressed concern that "inaccurate and detrimental testimony by government officials resulted in Dr. Lee needlessly spending eight months in prison under harsh and questionable conditions of confinement." Noting that "the handling of his case reflects poorly on the U.S. justice system," they urged the Attorney General "to rectify any wrongs to which Dr. Lee has been subjected, and to ensure that he receives fair and just treatment from now on."

In early 1999, Dr. Lee was fired from his job at the Los Alamos National Laboratory after he had become the target of an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation regarding the alleged theft of nuclear weapons information by China. In December 1999, he was charged with 59 counts of mishandling national security information. Facing life in prison, he was taken into custody without bail, placed in solitary confinement, and shackled during his one hour of daily exercise. Nine months later, after experts testified that much of the information Dr. Lee was charged with mishandling was in the public domain, a plea agreement was reached. Dr. Lee agreed to plead guilty to one felony count of mishandling data and to be debriefed by the government. In September 2000, he was sentenced to time served. The judge who approved the plea agreement apologized to Dr. Lee for the unfair manner in which he was held in custody, emphasizing that the handling of his case was an embarrassment to the United States and its citizens.





## SOUTH AFRICAN ACADEMY CONDEMNS XENOPHOBIC ATTACKS

In 2008, following attacks against migrants from Malawi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe that resulted in riots and left dozens dead, the Academy of Science of South Africa issued a [statement](#) that stressed the need to protect the human rights of foreign nationals:

*The Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) condemns the xenophobic attacks that took place in various parts of South Africa in the month of May 2008. These degrading attacks were a gross violation of human rights. Since the Second World War, there has been a developing consensus internationally that the goals of human liberty, freedom and protection of human rights need to be strongly fostered. In the past fifteen years, South African scholars have been at the forefront of research and publishing in this field. The xenophobic attacks on African foreign nationals, especially refugees in South Africa emphasise the necessity to redouble the effort to understand and to develop an ability to deal with these social evils. Foreign nationals make important contributions to both the formal and informal sectors of the South African economy. South Africa is a signatory to the 1951 Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1969 Organisation of African Unity Convention Governing Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. Those who enter the country seeking refuge from political persecution, human rights violations and extreme poverty, have rights which should be safeguarded. Actions that contravene national and international laws on immigration are unreservedly condemned. ASSAf is involved in joint partnerships with other African Academies and will continue to work tirelessly to build stronger ties with our counterparts in other parts of Africa, while promoting platforms where the different sectors of society can contribute to the dialogue on ideas of an inclusive social compact that will avoid such unfortunate incidents in the future. The Academy wishes to salute all those who have provided humanitarian assistance to the victims of the attacks and calls on all local communities in South Africa to respect fellow human beings, irrespective of the country from which they may originate.*

The Academy's decision to speak out against these attacks is rooted in its commitment to non-discrimination and respect for human dignity—principles which are as essential for science and scholarship as they are for society more broadly.

## ASSISTANCE FOLLOWING CONFLICT AND HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE

Along with their appeals for justice concerning cases and issues of human rights concern, academies and their members sometimes provide other types of needed assistance in response to conflict and human rights abuse. Notably, in cases where colleagues have fled their countries, academies and their members often work to connect these individuals, and their families, with organizations that arrange fellowships, academic placements, pro bono legal support, and other services. These efforts have been instrumental in helping many colleagues continue their work in safety, and they have sometimes contributed to the reconstruction of decimated higher education systems where colleagues have been able to return home. Academies and academy members have taken such action both in response to targeted threats and in response to more widespread human rights abuse—as where conflict has led to the mass displacement of large numbers of individuals, including scientists and scholars.

The following are examples of organizations that regularly liaise with academies and their members for the purpose of, inter alia, assisting scholars and their families in exile:

- [Council for At-Risk Academics \(CARA\)](#) [U.K.-based]
- [Institute of International Education Scholar Rescue Fund \(IIE-SRF\)](#) [U.S.-based]
- [Scholars at Risk \(SAR\)](#) [U.S.-based]

Each of these organizations is involved in arranging temporary academic positions for scholars under threat, in coordination with higher education partners located in the U.S./U.K. and around the world. These organizations

provide scholars who are unable to return home with guidance concerning integration into other academic markets. (*Scholars at Risk also coordinates advocacy activities in support of individual scholars and students under threat and in response to more widespread threats to faculties, universities, and systems.*) The [PAUSE program](#) (France) and the [Philipp Schwartz Initiative](#) of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (Germany) also provide universities and research institutions with the means to host scholars under threat.

In some cases, academies and their members arrange assistance (apart from appeals) for scholars under threat who remain in their home countries. They have, for instance, organized trial observations and prison visits to express solidarity with colleagues detained and/or facing unjust criminal charges. They have provided detained colleagues with academic materials to help them keep up with developments in their fields and, to the extent possible, continue their scholarly work. In response to wider challenges facing academic institutions in the wake of conflict and human rights abuses, academies have also helped to rebuild research capacity in the countries concerned.

“ I find it most admirable that scientists from all backgrounds share a bond of friendship beyond the world of science and share a common belief in humanity, peace and justice. ”

- Medical doctor and brother of former prisoner of conscience

[Sam Tarling]



## HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE OF THE GERMAN NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES LEOPOLDINA: SUPPORT FOR SYRIAN MEDICAL PERSONNEL

In response to widespread violence in Syria and deliberate attacks against health professionals in the country, the Leopoldina's [Human Rights Committee](#) has organized medical care for gravely injured Syrian medical personnel, with the assistance of several university hospitals in Germany. For more information, read the Leopoldina's [press release](#).

“ *It is a question of humanity and solidarity to help doctors, nurses and paramedics and their families when they run the risk of being badly injured or killed just because they are providing medical care...* ”

- Professor Hans-Peter Zenner, Chairman of the Leopoldina's Human Rights Committee

The Leopoldina's Human Rights Committee, and many academies around the world and their members, regularly speak out against such abuse.

## REBUILDING ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS AFTER CONFLICT

Situations of conflict and large-scale human rights abuse are frequently accompanied by the destruction of academic institutions, research facilities, and archives. Sometimes these institutions and resources have been targeted by warring parties in an effort at cultural cleansing. Even where academic and research materials have not been directly targeted for destruction, they are often in short supply following conflict.

Academic and research institutions from around the world, including national academies and their members, have assisted with cultural reconstruction in the aftermath of such tragedies. After the four-year siege of Sarajevo (1992-1996), for example, the U.S. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine donated books and journals to help strengthen the scientific infrastructure in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



# HUMAN RIGHTS DIALOGUE AND RESEARCH

Increasingly, academies are seeking to foster dialogue on the connections between their work and human rights, through discussions with their members as well as events that involve the wider public. Academy dialogue on these issues is wide-ranging and includes, for instance, discussion of the human rights opportunities and risks presented by scientific, technological, and medical innovations. As discussed above, the involvement of academies in grappling with such issues can help to inform societal understanding of rights, which is continually growing and changing.

In some cases, academies have incorporated discussion of relevant human rights standards into their consensus studies and other research projects. The Polish Academy of Sciences boasts a dedicated body—the

[Poznan Human Rights Centre](#)—that works within the framework of the Academy's Institute of Law Studies to conduct research and promote knowledge in the field of human rights. Since its founding in 1973, the Centre has focused on the application of international human rights standards within the Polish legal order. It has addressed questions involving a range of rights-related issues, such as questions related to biotechnology and human rights.

The existence of such specialized research bodies can provide a valuable way of exploring the connections between human rights and science, engineering, and medicine. However, even academies without such bodies often seek out opportunities to consider the relationship between their work and internationally recognized human rights.



## HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE OF THE GERMAN NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES LEOPOLDINA: HUMAN RIGHTS AND SCIENCE SYMPOSIA SERIES

Beginning in 2010 in Berlin, the Leopoldina's [Human Rights Committee](#) has organized regular symposia with representatives of European academies and the wider European scientific community on the theme of human rights and science. The symposia, which have been held in cooperation with national academies—such as in Poland, Switzerland, Slovenia, and Finland—provide an opportunity to debate topical human rights and ethics-related questions related to the work of national academies, and to discuss cases of scientists and scholars subjected to human rights abuse. Past events have addressed, for example, human rights issues related to biomedical research and neuroscience. Visit the [symposium series webpage](#) for more information.



[© vege - Fotolia.com]

The most recent symposium in the series was held September 28-29, 2017 in Helsinki and was hosted by the Council of Finnish Academies. This event explored the implications of environmental change on the rights of indigenous peoples living in the Arctic, as well as the role and responsibility of researchers when interacting with members of indigenous communities. The 2017 symposium brought together academy members, other scholars, policymakers, human rights experts, and members of the indigenous Sami community.



[© Finnish Academy of Science and Letters]



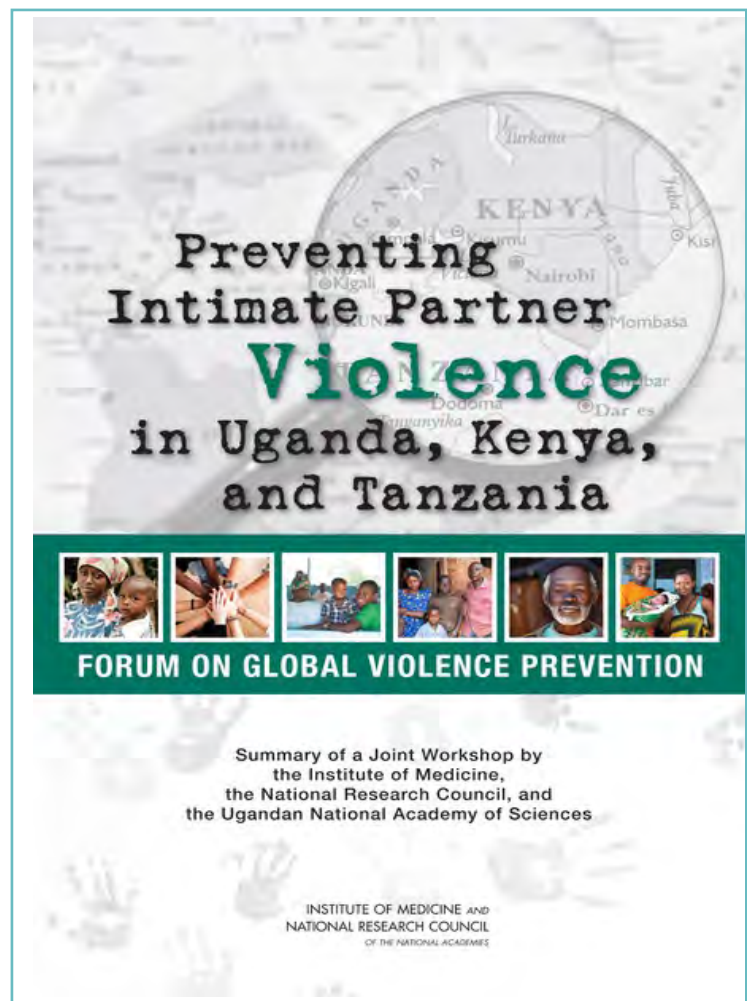
[© Jari Loisa]

## UGANDA NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES/U.S. INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE (NATIONAL ACADEMY OF MEDICINE): WORKSHOP ON PREVENTING INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

According to global estimates by the World Health Organization, around one in three women who have been in a relationship have experienced physical and/or sexual abuse by an intimate partner. Demographic and health surveys in East Africa indicate that approximately half of all women between the ages of 15-49 in Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania have experienced such abuse.

Recognizing that prevention of intimate partner violence (IPV) is possible and can be achieved through a greater understanding of the problem, in August 2014 the Uganda National Academy of Sciences (UNAS), in partnership with the U.S. Institute of Medicine (National Academy of Medicine)'s Forum on Global Violence Prevention, organized a two-day regional workshop on preventing IPV. Held in Kampala, the workshop focused on IPV as both a health and a human rights challenge. Participants considered problems related to the implementation of international/regional human rights standards relevant for IPV and discussed efforts to address those problems through public education and other means. The workshop helped to create synergies within a community of health workers, researchers, and decision-makers interested in cross-cutting, evidence-based IPV prevention efforts.

Read a [summary](#) of the workshop.



## DIVERSITY IN HUMAN SEXUALITY: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY IN AFRICA: CONSENSUS STUDY

*Diversity in Human Sexuality: Implications for Policy in Africa (2015)*, a consensus study led by the Academy of Science of South Africa and undertaken in collaboration with the Uganda National Academy of Sciences, considers international and regional human rights standards together with “current biological, socio-psychological, and public health evidence” in assessing the arguments that support laws making same-sex relationships illegal. The report confirms that “science has long shown that there is no reliable evidence that homosexuality causes

harm, either to the participating individuals or to society” and argues that:

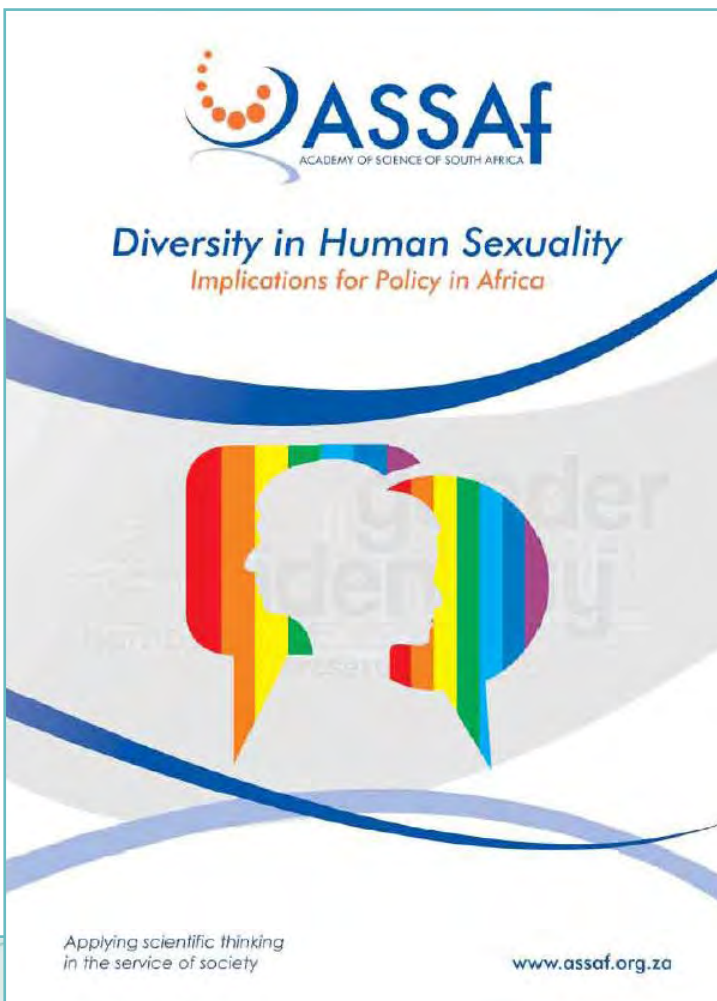
*...human rights and ethical considerations need to come to the fore in any discussion of these new laws. The key question is: do people have the right to express and live out the sexual orientation they develop, especially if it can be shown that their orientation harms neither the individuals concerned, nor the societies they inhabit?...*

In this connection, the report makes reference to the historical use of fallacious scientific justifications to justify discrimination and to forbid certain relationships:

*A similar debate to this has occurred before in a different context: colonial regimes in Africa and other parts of the world, and the apartheid regime in South Africa, for example, made sexual relationships and marriage across what they called ‘race-lines’ illegal... These arguments were also, in their day, justified by appeals to science and ‘scientific evidence’.*

The study concludes that there is no justification for efforts to eliminate same-sex relationships from society and highlights the need for efforts to counter hostility and violence toward individuals as a result of their sexual orientation.

[View the study](#) to learn more.







# NATIONAL ACADEMIES AND REFUGEE RIGHTS SPOTLIGHT

Academies and their members have taken a range of different actions in an effort to help address one of the most pressing human rights crises of our time—the forced displacement of over 68 million people, over 25 million of whom are refugees. Some have helped to provide academic placements and fellowships for colleagues who have fled their homes

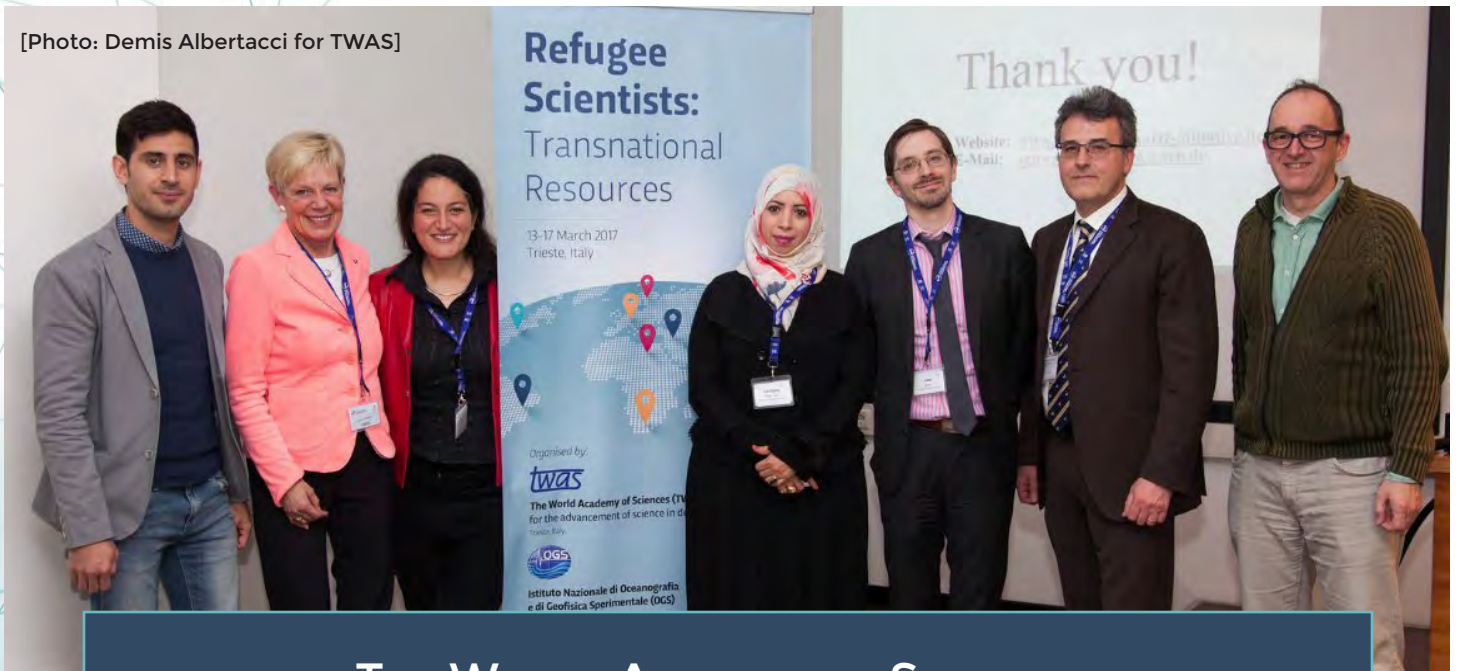
and communities, to assist these individuals in continuing their research in exile. Others have convened dialogues concerning the role of scientific, engineering, and medical innovation in helping to address rights-related challenges faced by refugees. Still others have initiated research projects on issues relating to displacement.

## COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE U.S. NATIONAL ACADEMIES OF SCIENCES, ENGINEERING, AND MEDICINE: PUBLIC SYMPOSIUM



On December 7-8, 2017, the U.S. National Academies' [Committee on Human Rights \(CHR\)](#) hosted a public symposium on the role of scientists, engineers, and health professionals in assisting refugees and other individuals who have been forcibly displaced. Scholars, innovators, and humanitarian organizations, among others, examined strategies being used to promote rights and dignity in situations of displacement and identified specific ongoing challenges that scientists, engineers, and health professionals can help to address. For more information on the event, including access to the webcast recording and a summary of the proceedings, visit the [CHR website](#).

[Photo: Demis Albertacci for TWAS]



## THE WORLD ACADEMY OF SCIENCES: RESOURCES FOR DISPLACED SCIENTISTS

In order to identify ways of supporting displaced scientists, engineers, and medical professionals, [The World Academy of Sciences](#), together with the [Italian National Institute of Oceanography and Experimental Geophysics](#) and [Euro-Mediterranean University](#), convened an international workshop in March 2017 that explored the consequences of displacement for professional colleagues and offered suggestions for the way forward. The workshop, held in Trieste, Italy, brought together over 50 individuals from 12 countries—including representatives of scientific and educational bodies, displaced scientists, officials from refugee organizations, and policymakers. The extensive recommendations that emerged from the workshop, [Refugee Scientists: Transnational Resources](#), include the creation of educational support, jobs programs, and other initiatives to facilitate integration. The recommendations also point to the need for more research, as a means to better understand the experience of displaced colleagues and to assess which programs are most effective in providing them with needed support.

Visit the [TWAS website](#) to learn more about the workshop.



Charles Kleinermann, left, of the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas in Amman, Jordan and Eqbal Dauqan, a displaced scientist from Yemen currently on a research fellowship in Norway.

[Photo: Demis Albertacci for TWAS]

A documentary film from  
**THE WORLD ACADEMY OF SCIENCES**

**twas**

# SCIENCE IN EXILE

[Image by Nicole Leghissa; graphic design by Rado Jagodic|Studio Link]

Director: **Nicole Leghissa**  
Producer: **Edward Lempinen**

(2017 | 37 minutes)

Featuring:

**GHANYA NAJI AL-NAQEB** (Yemen-Sudan)  
Nutritional scientist

**SAJA TAHA AL ZOUBI** (Syria-Lebanon)  
Economist, agriculture and gender

**ZAID ALHAJJAJ** (Iraq-Germany)  
PhD candidate in pharmaceutical biotechnology

**AHMAD SADIDDIN** (Syria-Italy)  
Economist, agriculture and development

**Four researchers,  
in flight from war.  
They dream of science  
in a time of peace.**

For scientists in Syria, Yemen and Iraq,  
war has had a devastating reality:  
Laboratories damaged. Universities closed.  
Colleagues disappeared or killed.

## SCIENCE IN EXILE

To highlight the challenges faced by displaced colleagues, The World Academy of Sciences has also produced a documentary film, *Science in Exile*. Directed by Italian filmmaker Nicole Leghissa, the film follows the struggles of scientists forced to flee Syria, Yemen, and Iraq, as they seek safety and the opportunity to continue making valuable scientific contributions in their adopted homes.

Visit the [TWAS website](#) to view the trailer of the film.



“It is our social responsibility to help people who were forced to flee, and to ease their integration in this country. By doing so, opportunities are created not only for those arriving, but also for Austria. In addition, the Academy will contribute its academic expertise to this open discussion in order to facilitate evidence-based political decisions.”

- Anton Zeilinger,  
President of the Austrian  
Academy of Sciences

## AUSTRIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES: REFUGEE SUPPORT, REFUGEE RESEARCH

The Austrian Academy of Sciences (OeAW) conducts research on the causes and consequences of migration in order to “make an active, science-based contribution to society’s debate on the refugee crisis.” The Academy shares its findings with political actors and the broader public through events, statements, and commentaries.

In 2015, OeAW supported scholars fleeing violence and persecution in their home countries who had been granted asylum in Austria. The OeAW program aimed to help individuals with academic or related qualifications integrate into the Austrian research community. The scholars performed internships at OeAW research institutes, in subjects ranging from archaeology to the life sciences.

# INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC BODIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Seventy years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a wide range of international institutions with a mandate to promote and protect human rights exists. Of special relevance for national academies are those international scientific bodies working to raise awareness of human rights issues and respond to rights violations. These can provide a useful resource for academies interested in exploring the relevance of human rights norms and standards for their activities. The H.R. Network, which produced the present resource guide, is one such organization.

Others include:

- the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's [Committee on Conventions and Recommendations](#) (UNESCO CR) and;
- the International Science Council's [Committee on Freedom and Responsibility in Science](#) (CFRS).

The human rights-related activities undertaken by each of these bodies intersect with issues involving science, research, and education.



## INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK OF ACADEMIES AND SCHOLARLY SOCIETIES

The [H.R. Network](#), which produced the present resource guide and is referenced throughout, is an international consortium of honorary societies in the sciences, engineering, and medicine with a shared interest in human rights. It was founded in 1993 by prominent Dutch human rights lawyer Pieter van Dijk and Nobel Laureates François Jacob (France), Torsten Wiesel (Sweden/United States), and Max Perutz (United Kingdom) (*pictured right, along with former H.R. Network Executive Committee member Edoardo Vesentini in the center*), to alert national academies to human rights abuses involving fellow scientists and scholars and to equip academies with the tools to provide support in such cases.



Today the H.R. Network advocates in support of professional colleagues suffering human rights abuses; promotes the free exchange of ideas and opinions among scientists and scholars; and supports the independence and autonomy of national academies and scholarly societies worldwide. The H.R. Network also raises global awareness about the connections between human rights and science, engineering, and medicine.

Open to all interested academies, the H.R. Network provides a platform for sharing information on cases and issues of concern through its Washington, D.C.-based Secretariat. The Secretariat issues regular alerts to H.R. Network-participating academies concerning urgent cases involving scientists, engineers, and health professionals under threat as a result of their legitimate professional work or other peaceful activities. The H.R. Network's Executive Committee, [composed of academy members from 12 countries](#), also periodically issues public statements on topical issues of global concern, such as gender discrimination in higher education and threats to scientific freedom. H.R. Network-participating academies assist in disseminating the Executive Committee's statements, and many academies use the alerts and statements as a starting point for their own advocacy (with each academy acting at its own discretion).

The H.R. Network holds biennial meetings on science and human rights themes. To date, 12 such meetings have been hosted by H.R. Network-affiliated academies around the world—including Sri Lanka, Morocco and Panama. These events provide an opportunity for academy members to explore topical science and human rights themes, for instance on sustainable development, and to share information and strategies on cases/issues of human rights concern. Meetings frequently include special sessions for students in host countries.

More than 80 academies have participated in the H.R. Network, e.g., by sending a representative to one or more of the H.R. Network's [biennial meetings](#).



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



## UNESCO'S COMMITTEE ON CONVENTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The [Committee on Conventions and Recommendations \(CR\)](#), composed of 30 member states, is a permanent committee of UNESCO's Executive Board. Among its various roles, the CR works to find amicable solutions in specific cases of alleged human rights abuse. Its focus is on improving the situation of the individuals involved, and it does not, for example, have the authority to sanction governments for their conduct. The CR considers violations of human rights falling within UNESCO's competence in the fields of education, science, culture, and information, including cases in which scientists and scholars are the alleged targets of abuse. Communications to the CR may originate from any person, group of persons, or non-governmental organization with reliable knowledge of the rights violations.

The CR's process is confidential and incorporates opportunities for indirect dialogue between the authors of human rights communications and the governments concerned. The CR invites governments to respond to allegations concerning human rights violations, including at the CR's semiannual meetings, and, increasingly, governments do so. The authors of communications, in turn, are invited to submit responses to government statements and provide follow-up information about cases. This process is typically repeated on a semi-annual basis until cases are resolved.

The CR often appeals for clemency in cases involving imprisoned scientists, engineers, health professionals, and scholars, and urges governments to ensure that they are treated humanely. In some cases, the CR has sent representatives to countries alleged to have violated human rights, and UNESCO's Director General has intervened in response to certain urgent CR cases. National academies have made extensive use of the unique CR process, which is frequently helpful in resolving situations of human rights concern.

## ISC's COMMITTEE ON FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY IN SCIENCE



# International Science Council

The International Science Council (ISC)'s [Committee on Freedom and Responsibility in Science \(CFRS\)](#), chaired by a member of ISC's Governing Board, serves as the guardian of the ISC Principle of Freedom and Responsibility in Science, adherence to which is a condition for ISC Membership.

*The Principle of Freedom and Responsibility in Science: the free and responsible practice of science is fundamental to scientific advancement and human and environmental well-being. Such practice, in all its aspects, requires freedom of movement, association, expression and communication for scientists, as well as equitable access to data, information, and other resources for research. It requires responsibility at all levels to carry out and communicate scientific work with integrity, respect, fairness, trustworthiness, and transparency, recognising its benefits and possible harms. In advocating the free and responsible practice of science, the Council promotes equitable opportunities for access to science and its benefits, and opposes discrimination based on such factors as ethnic origin, religion, citizenship, language, political or other opinion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or age.*

CFRS helps to raise international awareness about freedoms and responsibilities arising in relation to the conduct of science by issuing advisory material, convening scientific meetings, and considering cases of individual scientists whose human rights have been violated. The Committee is regularly in communication with national academies. The Committee builds on its predecessor under the International Council for Science (ICSU), whose work included the issuance of a [statement](#) on the importance of science for peace and an [advisory note](#) on the issue of gender equality in the practice of science.

For more information, click [here](#).



# ANNEX: SELECTED RESOURCES

CLICK ON THE TEXT BELOW FOR MORE INFORMATION.

## HUMAN RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS

- [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)
- [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#)
- [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#)
- ❖ [Other human rights instruments by subject matter, including regional treaties](#)
- ❖ [Ratification of selected human rights treaties by country](#)

## HUMAN RIGHTS COMPLAINT MECHANISMS

- [United Nations Special Procedures](#)
- [African Human Rights Mechanisms](#)
- [Inter-American Human Rights Mechanisms](#)
- [European Human Rights Mechanisms](#)

## SCIENCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS BODIES

- [International Human Rights Network of Academies and Scholarly Societies](#)
- [ISC's Committee on Freedom and Responsibility in Science](#)
- [UNESCO's Committee on Conventions and Recommendations](#)

## ASSISTANCE FOR AT-RISK SCHOLARS

- [Scholars at Risk](#)
- [The Council for At-Risk Academics \(CARA\)](#)
- [The Institute of International Education Scholar Rescue Fund \(IIE-SRF\)](#)
- [Program PAUSE](#)
- [Philipp Schwartz Initiative of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation](#)

A complex network of teal lines and dots of various sizes, some with concentric circles, creating a web-like structure. The background is a light teal color with a subtle pattern of small white dots.

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## FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

### THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK OF ACADEMIES AND SCHOLARLY SOCIETIES

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