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Endangered Scholars Worldwide

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Endangered Scholars Worldwide

Attacks on higher education communities are occurring at an alarming rate worldwide, threatening the safety and well-being of scholars, students, and academic staff, as well as the autonomy of higher education institutions. In response to a global increase in threats to academic freedom, Endangered Scholars Worldwide has expanded its presence as an online publication, sharing frequent updates on new and developing cases.



While we will still publish a regular update in *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, going forward our activity will continue under the auspices of the New University in Exile Consortium, www.newuniversityinexileconsortium.org. The Consortium was launched in the fall of 2018 at the New School to create a supportive intellectual community for threatened, exiled scholars. It works to help them identify possible path toward new futures and find placements at Consortium schools of which there are now over 40 worldwide.

For the most current information and ways in which you can be involved in our efforts to defend academic freedom and free expression, we invite you to visit our website www.endangeredscholarsworldwide.net or follow us at <https://twitter.com/ESWNEWSCHOOL>.

If you are aware of a scholar or student whose case you believe we should investigate, please get in touch with us at esw@newschool.edu.


Thank you for your unwavering support.

SPECIAL DELIVERY

Endangered Scholars Worldwide is deeply concerned about global escalation of attacks on academic freedom and university autonomy. As the last year's global democracy index results indicate, the worldwide authoritarian upheaval geared up in 2020 and 2021, disproportionately targeting scholars, students, and higher education institutions to obstruct the free production and transmission of scientific knowledge and to quell dissenting voices. According to the latest report by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), in 2020 and 2021 more than 5,000 lethal or nonlethal attacks on academics or students took place in at least 85 countries, harming more than 9,000 scholars and students. The countries most affected by attacks on schools in this period were Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, and Palestine. At the most brutal end of the spectrum, armed civilians claiming a vigilante role carried out horrifying attacks on academic communities and higher education institutions, killing and raping students and teachers, bombing or burning schools, and confiscating their resources. The attacks with highest mortality rates took place in Afghanistan and Nigeria.

As of June 2022, Afghanistan remains the most dangerous place in the world for scholars, scientists, and students. Following the withdrawal of US forces in August 2021, the Taliban government has gradually increased its power and control. Scholars were assassinated, and several students and university personnel were killed in attacks by the Taliban on campuses, unravelling two decades of progress in the country's education system. In March 2022, right after the reopening of schools, the Taliban declared the reinforcement of burqa (full-body coverage for Muslim women) for all girls and women and banned girls above the sixth grade from attending school.

In addition to the worldwide democratic regress in the past years, the unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine since February 2022 has been posing a massive threat to global academic cooperation, besides the immediate threat it poses to the Ukrainian universities and infra-



structure, let alone the lives of Ukrainian people. According to estimates from the United Nations, more than 14 million people in Ukraine have been internally displaced or have fled to other countries. On March 4, 2022, while the death toll continued to rise and the conflict intensified, the European Union announced that Ukrainian citizens would be entitled to the newly enacted temporary protection directive, permitting them to live, work, and study in EU member states for up to three years. On April 21, 2022, the US government also announced a transitional pathway for Ukrainian citizens to come to the United States and stay temporarily in a two-year period of parole. Ukrainians participating in this program must have a supporter in the United States who agrees to cover the financial requirements for the duration of their stay in the US. The Russian government's aggression is also targeting domestic dissidents with prison sentences of up to 15 years on charges of treason and espionage. The Russian dissident academics have been facing a twofold dire situation: on the one hand they are facing persecution and prosecution in Russia, while on the other hand they are being excluded from global academic community as a part of the worldwide anti-war action to censure the Russian state, which drastically limits their chances of finding refuge and condemns them to civil death.

In the face of intensifying attacks on academic freedom among other liberal democratic values and principles, on May 3–5, 2022, “G7+ Partners” dedicated this year to international academic cooperation and announced the Berlin Declaration, reinforcing the affiliated countries' commitment to cherish and protect liberal democratic values, freedom of speech, and academic freedom, and to support scholars and students in the face of oppression, alienation, and prosecution.

ESW stands in solidarity with those who strive for freedom and safety across the world. We call upon all international organizations and academic and professional associations devoted to the promotion and defense of human rights to join us in urging the Russian government to end this illegitimate and immoral war, and the Taliban government to properly fulfill its part of the US withdrawal agreement and

lift the education ban that alienates young girls and women from society. We demand the international community's full attention to make all efforts to urge these governments to honor their obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights treaties, including to ensure free and unhindered humanitarian access to people in need of assistance and protection, open borders for the safe movement of students, faculty, artists, human rights activists, and journalists; and to honor the right to education and free expression. Please sign the New University in Exile Consortium's petition in support of Ukraine at <https://www.change.org/p/ukraine-statement-of-support-will-you-sign>.

Visit www.endangeredscholarsworldwide.net for more information.

—By *Dolunay Bulut*