

Urgent appeal to European Governments and EU Institutions: Take Action for Afghanistan's scholars, researchers, and civil society actors

We, the undersigned higher education associations, networks, and leaders in the field of scholar protection, urge European governments and EU institutions to take immediate action to secure the lives and careers of Afghanistan's scholars, students, and civil society actors.

Many of the undersigned organisations are leaders in the field of provision of support to researchers and scholars at risk. These include the Scholars at Risk Network (SAR), the PAUSE programme in France, the Philipp Schwartz Initiative of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, the Council for At-Risk Academics and the IIE's Scholar Rescue Fund who arrange temporary positions at higher education institutions around the world for those who are unable to work safely in their home countries. European higher education institutions are at the forefront of these efforts: over the past two years, 80% of positions of safe haven arranged by SAR were in Europe.

Organisations supporting at-risk scholars are racing to offer assistance to researchers, scholars and civil society actors in Afghanistan who, at this moment, are desperately seeking ways to safety. For the better part of the past twenty years these scholars and civil society actors in Afghanistan have fought for a new, rights-respecting, forward-looking, knowledge-based Afghanistan. Many have worked for or in partnership with EU institutions, NATO partners, European governments and other international and civil society organisations. Hundreds travelled to Europe to seek an education and returned to their homeland, dedicated to values of openness tolerance and free expression. These are not the values of the Taliban, so their lives are now at risk. Timely government action can still make an enormous difference. We implore you to act on their behalf now.

Specifically, we seek immediate action from European Governments and EU institutions to:

- **Continue evacuation flights** for as long as possible so as to include scholars, students, and civil society actors who have supported the forward-looking, pluralist vision of Afghanistan that the EU, European governments, NATO partners and other international and civil society organisations embraced. **Do not end flights until all are safely out who wish to leave the country.**
- **Increase resettlement quotas** to help those in need of international protection, including researchers, scholars, and civil society actors. Ensure international protection is provided to current Afghan protection applicants through an expedited process, and prioritise and expedite family reunification applications.



- **Create expedited complementary legal pathways** for candidates who demonstrate an existing host institution, job, or sponsor, including for families, that would facilitate their arrival and earliest adjustment. **Many European higher education institutions are ready to host scholars in temporary positions**; capture that opportunity by expediting the processing of individuals for whom they are ready to step forward, and providing logistical support.
- Waive **any intent-to-return and home residency requirements that may apply to visa applications** for Afghan scholars and researchers for the foreseeable future. Barring full waiver, issue authoritative guidance to consular and border officials supporting a determination of satisfaction of the intent to return by showing a willingness to return in the absence of the Taliban, or a credible, durable and rebuttable demonstration that the individual would be able to return and live safely under the Taliban.
- Establish a **dedicated EU fellowship scheme** for researchers and scholars at risk, including scholars, students, and civil society actors from Afghanistan, especially women and ethnic and religious minorities, to undertake fellowships, lectureships, researcher positions, or temporary academic positions at European higher education institutions. See the EU-funded [Inspireurope](#) project recommendation for a dedicated scheme [here](#). Some funds for such streams might be redirected from existing funds budgeted for Afghanistan programming, but which may not be possible to expend under the current conditions. Nevertheless, new funds will be required to meet the most urgent needs.
- Establish **dedicated national fellowships** for researchers and scholars at risk, including scholars, students, and civil society actors from Afghanistan, similar to existing national fellowship programmes run by the PAUSE programme in France and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation's Philipp Schwartz Initiative in Germany.

The window in which to take these steps, save lives, and redeem some measure of Europe's investment in Afghanistan's future is rapidly closing. Your urgent intervention is needed to mobilize the relevant departments and agencies.

The eroding situation in Afghanistan poses a threat not only to the lives of our colleagues still in Afghanistan, but to the future of that country. The moral leadership of the European Union including its commitment to human rights, rule-of-law, and multilateralism, is needed now more than ever, and it is imperative to see those commitments put into practice at this time of crisis. The European higher education community is ready to do its part, but we need your help. If we move quickly, we can go a long way towards mitigating the worst of the threats and demonstrate continuing commitment to the future of Afghanistan and its people.



GERDA HENKEL STIFTUNG



Endorsing Organisations (as of 23 August 2021):

Academic Freedom and Internationalisation Working Group	Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT)
Academics for Peace, Germany	Marie Curie Alumni Association
ALLEA- All European Academies	Magna Charta Observatory
Alexander von Humboldt Foundation	Network of Concerned Historians
BIRARADA	PAUSE
Council for At-Risk Academics (Cara)	Scholars at Risk Network
Central European University	SAR Denmark
Coimbra Group	SAR Europe
Compostela Group of Universities	SAR Finland
Council for European Studies	SAR Germany
Czech Rectors' Conference	SAR Greece
German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)	SAR Italy
European Association for International Education (EAIE)	SAR Ireland
European Students Union (ESU)	SAR Norway
European University Association (EUA)	SAR Slovakia
EASA - European Association of Social Anthropologists	SAR Sweden
Euroscience	SAR Switzerland
Flemish Interuniversity Council (VLIR)	Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences
Gerda Henkel Foundation	swissuniversities
Global Campus of Human Rights	The Guild
German Rectors Conference (HRK)	Threatened Scholars Integration Initiative of the Open Society University Network
Global Student Forum	UAF
IIE -SRF Europe	UNICA
Inspireurope: Initiative to Promote, Integrate and Support Researchers at Risk	Universities Austria
International Migration Research Network (IMISCOE)	Universities Ireland

For more information and further action:

- **Media inquiries contact:** Sinead O’Gorman, Scholars at Risk Europe, sareurope@mu.ie
- Add your **organisation or network’s endorsement:** Joel Hanisek, Scholars at Risk Europe, sareurope@mu.ie
- For **higher education institutions:** If your institution is willing to host at-risk individuals from Afghanistan, please complete the survey at <https://bit.ly/3kjPv9S>

Scholars at Risk is an international network of over 500 higher education institutions in 40 countries, including over 350 in Europe, whose core mission is to protect threatened scholars and intellectuals, principally by arranging temporary positions at network-member institutions for those who are unable to work safely in their home countries. Over the last 20 years our network has assisted over 1500 threatened scholars, students, and practitioners. SAR’s European office, based in Ireland, supports and coordinates activities of SAR sections in 12 European countries. SAR partners, notably the PAUSE programme in France, the Philipp Schwartz Initiative of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, the Council for At-Risk Academics and the IIE’s Scholar Rescue Fund, all leaders in the field of support to scholars, have also arranged positions for hundreds of scholars at European higher education institutions. For information visit www.scholarsatrisk.org.



Additional Endorsing Organisations (as of 29 August 2021):

Academic Cooperation Association (ACA)
 Bard College Berlin
 Global Observatory on Academic Freedom
 L'Académie de recherche et d'enseignement supérieure (ARES)
 Open Society University Network (OSUN)
 University of Oslo
 MCI | The Entrepreneurial School (Austria)
 NIAS - Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences
 University of Greifswald
 WU Vienna University of Economics and Business
 Hochschule für Wirtschaft und Recht Berlin
 KU Leuven
 University of Milan
 Global Platform for Higher Education in Emergencies (former Global Platform for Syrian Students)
 University of Sienna
 Linnaeus University
 Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland
 Danube Rectors' Conference
 University of Trento
 Jagiellonian University
 Universities of Sanctuary Ireland
 Utrecht Network
 Berlin University of the Arts (Universität der Künste Berlin / UdK Berlin)
 German U15
 NTNU Norwegian University of Science and Technology
 University of Bern
 Centre for Democracy and Peace Research
 Ruhr University Bochum
 Fulda University of Applied Sciences
 Maastricht University
 European Alliance for Social Sciences and Humanities
 TU9 - German Universities of Technology
 Pontifical Catholic University of Parana - PUCPR
 Université Grenoble Alpes
 University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland
 Aramizda Gender Studies Association

