



SCHOLARS AT RISK
NETWORK

**ACADEMIC FREEDOM ACADEMIC IN WEST AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON
15-16 APRIL 2009**



SUMMARY REPORT

The University of Ghana, the West African Research Centre (WARC), the Scholars at Risk Network (SAR), and the Network for Education and Academic Rights (NEAR), together with the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) and the African Academic Freedom Network held a symposium and workshop on 'Academic Freedom in West African Universities' on 15-16 April 2009. The events were held at the campus of the University of Ghana in Legon. They were supported by grants from Foundation Open Society Institute (Zug) and the Arcadia Fund.

Faculty members and researchers from ten countries participated in the workshop including representatives from Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malaysia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The highlights of the two day event include:

Symposium

- Overview of current work to promote academic freedom in Africa
- Discussion of on-going work to promote academic freedom in different world regions
- Case studies and personal experiences, including reports from Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malaysia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal.

Workshop

- Discussion of a common framework for analysing academic freedom-related concerns
- Elaboration of possible advocacy/response strategies

Plan for Follow-up Activities

- Agreement on outreach to expand the African Academic Freedom Network (AAFN)
- Agreement that the AAFN will coordinate follow-up activities, in cooperation with NEAR, SAR and other partners
- Agreement on development of a global academic freedom newsletter with regional contributions through the AAFN
- Agreement on a joint proposal for establishing an International Academic Freedom Day
- Agreement on joint awareness-raising projects



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**Symposium on
ACADEMIC FREEDOM IN WEST AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES
WEDNESDAY, 15 APRIL**

Events opened with introductions by participating co-organizers. **Clifford Nii Boi Tagoe**, Vice-Chancellor of the [University of Ghana](#) began by welcoming participants and thanking the co-organizers. The Vice-Chancellor emphasized the inseparable link between academic freedom and human rights in general. In Professor Tagoe's view, the current political environment in Ghana is favourable for the enjoyment of academic freedom. Over the past several years, the University of Ghana has embarked on a series of structural reforms to ensure greater respect for academic freedom on campus. The university established a Visitation Panel in 2006 to facilitate the formulation and articulation of a vision of the institution's future and to make the decisions necessary to turn vision into reality. In line with the panel's recommendations, the university has sustained efforts to promote academic freedom and institutional autonomy, has worked to improve student-lecturer relations and to ensure their representation in university governing bodies. The Vice-Chancellor concluded by expressing his hope that the forum would provide an opportunity to learn from the experiences of participating institutions and to draw from these in a shared quest to see academic freedom flourish on campuses across the continent.

Ousmane Sène, Director of the [West African Research Centre](#) (WARC) began by thanking the University of Ghana for hosting the symposium and workshop. Dr. Sène thanked in particular the Minister for Education and the Vice-Chancellor for their participation. In Dr. Sène's view, such high-level participation in the event signalled the value that the current government and university administration at the University of Ghana have chosen to assign to academic freedom and university autonomy. Dr. Sène also reminded participants of the presence of another key actor in academic freedom and related issues in Africa—the Association of African Universities. Dr Sène understood all of the above as a sign of positive cooperation and contribution to the efforts being made by SAR, NEAR, CODESRIA and WARC to further entrench academic freedom and university autonomy in West Africa and around the world. Dr. Sène pledged WARC's commitment to remain a reliable partner in the initiative for greater academic freedom in Africa.

Goolam T.G. Mohamedbhai, Secretary General of the [Association of African Universities](#) (AAU) discussed ways in which recent changes in higher education are affecting academic freedom and university autonomy, especially in the context of Africa. First, although public funding for higher education has been diminishing in most parts of the world, there appears to be greater control by government on higher education. Second, there has been increasing privatisation of higher education with a clear preference for market-driven programmes. Third, because of the unprecedented demand for access to higher education, institutions in Africa are under pressure to put greater emphasis on teaching at the expense of research. Fourth, globalisation and dramatic improvement in technology have led to cross-border delivery of higher education, mainly from the North, on a scale not witnessed before. Finally, after insisting that higher education does not yield acceptable economic returns as compared to primary and basic education, donor and development agencies have now acknowledged the importance of higher education in promoting economic and social development. This has unleashed large sources of funds for the sector, especially to institutions in Africa. In



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Professor Mohamedbhai's view, all of the above have important, albeit indirect, effects on academic freedom and university autonomy. To conclude, Professor Mohamedbhai posed a question about cases/countries in which academic freedom is being flagrantly undermined on a daily basis. In dealing with such cases, the world higher education community often faces a dilemma. Intervention can have political and diplomatic repercussions and can be considered external interference in national matters. However, action at institutional or national level may not be possible or wise. Action is often more viable at the regional and international level and it is through academic solidarity that efforts must, in these cases, be directed.

Mr. Robert J. Quinn, Executive Director of [Scholars at Risk](#) (SAR) began by thanking the participants on behalf of SAR and the [Network for Education and Academic Rights](#) (NEAR), and recognized the support for the events from the [Open Society Institute](#) and [Arcadia Fund](#). Mr. Quinn thanked the Minister and the Vice-Chancellor in particular. He also recognized the important work of Dr. Kwadwo Appiagyei-Atua, Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Law at the University of Ghana in preparation for the event. Mr. Quinn described the principal goals of the event as twofold: 1) to gain a better understanding of the current challenges facing West African universities and scholars, 2) to discuss how participants might work together with networks of concerned individuals around the world to defend and promote core university values. Mr. Quinn expressed hope that the workshop would build on the progress made at a workshop in Ethiopia in October 2008, at which discussions led to the establishment of a new African Academic Freedom Network.



Hon. Alex Tetteh Enyoh, Minister for Education in Ghana opened by noting that the quest for knowledge and wisdom and the need to share them are deeply engrained in Ghanaian culture and reflected in its proverbs and folklore. He went on to say that wisdom and knowledge are not acquired in a vacuum but in a rights-enabling environment. In his view, academic freedom should entail the freedom to access and use information for research and teaching purposes, the freedom for scholars to decide research priorities and research methods, to publish their research findings and to publicize their intellectual positions. Academic freedom should also include autonomy to shape curriculum. It is often the case, he remarked, that government is seen as the sole impediment to the realisation of academic freedom. However, in today's world, many non-State entities, including multi-national corporations, private corporate entities and even NGOs, have become keen competitors and have even sought to out-manoeuvre the State in its attempt to control and manipulate academics and information. In situations where the government's responsibility of respecting academic freedom has been largely fulfilled, the duty of the State with respect to rights and freedom extends to protecting academic freedom from unnecessary abuse by other forces. Governments have a duty to take proactive steps to promote academic freedom. There is room for change within universities themselves as well—particularly with regard to improving lecturer-student relations and relations between professors and junior lecturers. The Minister then declared the workshop officially open and wished participants fruitful deliberations.



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Session 1: Overview of Current Work to Promote Academic Freedom in Africa

Mr. K.B. Asante, former Minister for Education in Ghana, chaired this session. Mr. Asante began by noting that the debate on academic freedom was as old as organized learning itself. When he himself had the opportunity to witness at first hand the progress that autonomy in secondary schools could bring, he became passionate about academic freedom and autonomy issues. He also became aware of the ways in which organized authority and interest groups can oppose movement towards greater academic freedom.

Mr. Asante then introduced the panelists for Session 1.

Robert Quinn outlined the NEAR/SAR workshops project, again thanking funding partners OSI and Arcadia. Mr. Quinn explained NEAR/SAR are engaged in a multi-year effort to develop links among higher education professionals and institutions in all regions of the world for the dual purposes of 1) strengthening the position of higher education professionals and institutions, particularly those under threat, and 2) increasing public understanding of and respect for university values, including access, autonomy, academic freedom, accountability/ transparency and social responsibility. Mr. Quinn emphasized that threats to these values are a global problem affecting all regions. The workshops project seeks to develop global solutions to this global problem. Mr. Quinn explained that four workshops had already been held, most recently in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in October 2008, and others are being planned. He concluded by thanking participants for sharing their time and experience. He invited participants to share questions, comments on proposals for follow-up activities that were developed at prior workshops, and any new proposals, including especially any thoughts on strengthening the new, regional networks have been formed including an Arab Society for Academic Freedom and the African Academic Freedom Network.



Carlos Cardoso provided a brief examination of the [Dar es Salaam Declaration on Academic Freedom and Social Responsibility of Academics](#) and the [Kampala Declaration on Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility](#) along with an overview of [CODESRIA's Academic Freedom and Human Rights Programme](#). Dr. Cardoso noted that while the Dar Es Salaam Declaration puts greater emphasis on the role of education and its importance in an individual's personal development, both declarations heavily emphasize the question of social responsibility of intellectuals and its inextricability from the struggle for human rights more generally. After a brief discussion of the ways in which academics might assume greater social responsibility, Dr. Cardoso turned to a description of the goals of CODESRIA's Academic Freedom Programme. The Programme consists of the following components: research on the different aspects of academic freedom; publication of debates, reflections and essays on academic freedom in Africa; organizing and promoting debates and discussions on academic freedom and related themes; supporting researchers, academics and intellectuals in difficulty. Dr. Cardoso noted that since the programme's founding in 1994, political systems have changed for the better in many countries on the continent. Dr. Cardoso



concluded with a series of recommendations for future activities including, amongst others, a series of conferences on human rights and academic freedom in Africa; an annual report on the State of Academic Freedom in Africa; reenergized relations with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights; the launch of an alerts network; and the founding of an academic freedom journal.

Alice Lamptey reported on the Regional Conference on Higher Education in Africa organised by the Regional Bureau for Education in Africa (BREDA) in November 2008, ahead of the 2009 UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education (WCHE).



The BREDA conference was one of several held around the world in preparation for the WCHE. The principal questions and priorities identified by participants at the event in November included access and diversification; quality assurance; working conditions for academics; university management and governance issues; research, technology and innovation; and financing. Academic freedom was addressed during the event but was not given prominence on the agenda. A number of continuing problems were also

identified, including questions of curriculum relevance, gender equity and quality. However, it was acknowledged that progress had been made in the higher education sector in Africa over the past ten years.

Discussion highlights:

- The Kampala Declaration and the Dar Es Salaam Declaration are both important documents with regard to the setting of standards for academic freedom across the continent. However, more attention needs to be paid to developing follow-up mechanisms and to monitoring implementation of the declarations.
- Is it possible for a university or a research programme to have autonomy if a large portion of the university or programme funding comes from one source—whether government or private sources?
- How can one best deal with cultural or attitudinal dynamics where there are differences of opinion with regard to academic freedom?
- Discussion on how best to change people's attitudes to women in university life. Does affirmative action, as it is currently implemented at universities in Africa, really create an 'enabling' environment?
- Several participants expressed the view that concentration of power is still a problem in many universities across the continent. Even if this phenomenon does not relate directly to academic freedom, it can often have an indirect adverse effect on working conditions which in turn will impact on an individual's academic freedom.
- Several comments also about the economic dimensions of academic freedom, including concerns about the process by which university funds are allocated and about the growing use of part-time academics. Generally agreed that the current world financial difficulties may put further strain on universities and academic freedom.



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Session 2: Perspectives on Academic Freedom in Different World Regions

Kwame Karikari, Executive Director of the Media Foundation for West Africa chaired Session 2. He introduced the work of his organisation, a media advocacy organisation which promotes freedom of thought and expression in West Africa. The Foundation aims to use free mass media to bring to fulfilment all other universally subscribed rights and freedoms for all. Before introducing the panelists, Dr. Karikari urged participants not to omit student-lecturer relations as a key factor in any conversation about academic freedom.

Elizabeth Ayalew, Assistant Professor at the College of Education, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia reported on the proceedings of a workshop held in Ethiopia in October on “Rethinking Academic Freedom in East African Universities.” The workshop was co-sponsored by the Forum for Social Studies in Ethiopia (FSS), the Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA), the British Council, NEAR and SAR and was supported by a grant from the Open Society Institute. At that event, participants from across East Africa discussed issues of common concern. These included, amongst others, the effect of academics’ increased involvement in private consultancy activities; the issue of universities serving as fora for the opposition of ruling systems; the often weak relations between government education departments and universities; institutional governance concerns; commercialization of higher education; security of tenure; and self-censorship. On the whole participants agreed that the role of students and the role of civil society in promoting academic freedom needed to be further developed. Participants also shared response strategies and agreed that a new **African Academic Freedom Network** would be an effective vehicle for information-sharing and for the development of joint projects going forward.

Azmi Sharom, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Law, University of Malaya, Malaysia gave an overview of the major academic freedom concerns in Southeast Asia. Dr. Sharom began by pointing to the difficulty of making generalisations about conditions on a region-wide basis and focused his presentation primarily on conditions in three countries: Indonesia,



Malaysia and Singapore. In these contexts, he examined the laws directly affecting academic freedom e.g. the Statutory Bodies Discipline, the Surcharge Act, the University and University Colleges Act as well as laws that have had an indirect effect on academic freedom e.g. The Internal Security Act and the Sedition Act. Dr. Sharom discussed instances of political interference in academia by ruling parties with examples of academics that were subject to the pressures of law and political interference. He also discussed the gradual development of a culture of fear on campuses and how this, in addition to the above factors, has contributed to a decline in academic standards. He noted that for academic freedom to prosper there has to be a desire among academics themselves for greater freedom. The absence of such a desire is a cause for concern. Dr. Sharom concluded that he was invigorated by the knowledge that “thousands of miles away there are people who are just as concerned.”



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Jonathan Travis, Programme Officer at NEAR, provided a brief summary of NEAR's work including NEAR's Action Alert Programme. He emphasised the importance of disseminating information on threats widely and highlighted the advantages of bringing the world's attention to particular cases. Mr. Travis then briefly surveyed academic freedom issues around the world, paying particular attention to common violations occurring in multiple contexts and countries. Examples included defamation, restrictions on travel, arrest on false charges and university closures. Examples were drawn from the US, the UK and elsewhere.

Discussion highlights:

- Too many academics are unaware of the existence of the [UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel](#). There is further work to be done to raise awareness of existing standards.
- The military plays a significant role on campus at universities in several West African countries. Interactions between students, faculty and military need to be examined more.
- Participants posed questions about the mechanisms that SAR and NEAR have in place to receive information about individuals in need of assistance.
- One participant expressed the view that in past years academics were more amenable to conducting extra-curricular activities on a voluntary basis i.e. without pay. This is becoming more and more uncommon. A discussion ensued on why this might be so.
- More work is needed to promote academic integrity and to draw attention to incidents of academic malpractice, including, in particular, the problem of plagiarism.

Session 3: Case Studies on Efforts to Promote Academic Freedom in West Africa

Audrey Gadzekpo, Professor of Communications at the University of Ghana, chaired Session 3. Before introducing the panelists, Dr. Gadzekpo noted that academic freedom can be curtailed in ways that we do not always expect. The work environment and, in particular, the problem of sexual harassment in the workplace need to be looked at seriously and brought into discussions about academic freedom.

Francis Akindes, Professor of Economic Sociology at the Université de Bouaké, Côte d'Ivoire gave an overview of academic freedom concerns in Côte d'Ivoire, in particular in the aftermath of the failed coup d'Etat of 2002. Dr. Akindes presentation addressed the ways in which civil war has redefined the parameters of discussions about academic freedom. In particular, he addressed how the geography of civil war affects academia; how the ideology of defending a 'homeland in peril' can legitimize official political rhetoric on the causes of war, and how we should interpret an asymmetry of ideas—i.e. on the one hand a strong patriotic narrative from the State and its supporters, and on the other, timid attempts by academics to write more objective accounts of the war.

Esi Sutherland-Addy, Head of the Language, Literature, and Drama Section, Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana tracked the trajectory of higher education policy reform in Ghana from 1987 to 1997, focusing particularly on governance. Professor Sutherland has held portfolios as Ghana's deputy minister for Higher Education and for Culture and Tourism. She began by explaining that in the first five years of the reform a



comprehensive review of higher education was undertaken, followed by the development of a policy framework that took a range of factors into account including the need to create a self regulating and nationally accountable system of higher education. She then discussed the objectives and intent of the policy framework and the processes by which the objectives were established. Professor Sutherland also described the structures established to improve governance in higher education and assessed how these structures have worked in practice. In her view, there are state institutions to be proud of in Ghana today, working closely and effectively with universities. Universities have freedom to elect their own chancellors and university councils usually have broad representation from students, staff, faculty and administration. She concluded by noting that reform in Ghana had been difficult but led to the establishment of important benchmarks and well-governed, effective institutions.

Moussa Sissoko, Co-Director of Point Sud Mali and professor at the Institut Supérieur de Formation et de Recherche Appliquée at the Université de Bamako in Mali, began by providing a brief account of the Université de Bamako's recent history and the current structure of its administrative bodies. He went on to describe current challenges at the university including a shortage of professors, shortage of teaching materials, inadequate training for professors and other teaching staff,



governance and accountability problems. University autonomy is limited. There is strong state intervention in matters relating to curriculum, appointment of Vice-Chancellors, budget distribution, recruitment of teaching staff and recruitment of students.

Victor Dugga, Executive Director of Advancement at the **University of Jos** in Nigeria opened with a brief overview of the higher education system in Nigeria. In his view, the full impact of military rule on university culture in Nigeria has yet to be explored. One result of years of military rule has been the increased politicization of academic staff unions which had become heavily involved in pro-democracy campaigns. Campus life in Nigeria has often been characterized by threats and insecurity, for both staff and students. The absence of a predictable university calendar has also been a serious problem. Union-led strikes at local and national levels, sometimes up to 6 months at a time, have caused major disruption in academic calendars e.g. the University of Ibadan cancelled one session and closed from February to September 2007. Stability in the academic calendar is one factor enticing students to other West African States. Other problems affecting academic freedom in Nigeria include low wages, brain drain and the ensuing loss of expertise. Dr. Dugga concluded by mentioning that Nigerian universities have recently been accused of low participation in the development of their country. In his view, a new culture of active, results-oriented research needs to be re-invigorated in Nigeria to make universities more relevant to society.

Discussion highlights:

- It is important to be aware of the ways in which institutions can be manipulated. Government is not always, and not even primarily, the source of manipulation in many



countries. How do we feel about corporate sponsorship? e.g. the naming of buildings after university donors. There needs to be greater thought given to the question of control by non-state actors, including the role of private enterprise, foundations and NGOs.

- It was noted in response to Dr. Dugga's presentation and brain drain that Nigerian students constitute the largest foreign student population at the University of Ghana.
- Discussion on whether universities can retain a large degree of autonomy even if they are state funded. Participants provided examples of where the State is the primary funder but the university is not beholden to the State. State funding does not therefore automatically mean strong state intervention in university governance or curriculum-setting.
- Discussion on average salary for academics within each country and how these salaries relate to those of other public and private sector workers.
- How should we interpret the recent rise of new national institutions such as: National Institutions of Higher Education or National Accreditation Boards? Some suggested that such bodies encroach further on the autonomy of universities. Others articulated that there is value in having institutions whose role is to interface with government and universities.
- There was a broad discussion on the role of universities, and the role of the intellectual in society. Is it appropriate for a university to support the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake? Or should the pursuit of knowledge serve a larger purpose? What are the limits of an academic's duty to society-at-large?
- Democratization of society and the freedom of universities are inextricably linked. We cannot work effectively for one without also working towards the other.
- How do we best deal with situations of bullying where, for example, a Dean insists on putting their name to a paper that you yourself have written?
- Restrictions on freedom of movement/travel can inhibit work. Difficulty obtaining visas e.g. Schengen visas to attend conferences or meetings with colleagues can hamper progress in an area of research.
- How can we create more opportunities for women in higher education across the continent? The percentage of women in the teaching body is still extremely low.
- In places where there would appear to be high levels of academic freedom, where a lecturer can express any idea they wish, we need to think about whether the incentives are there for the individual to *enjoy* their academic freedom. We need to ask ourselves: Is the environment in which I teach one in which academic freedom can flourish?
- Most academics have no training in administration but yet are expected to make administrative decisions that affect the running of a university. Mentoring programmes for deans might be a step towards addressing this problem.
- More opportunities are needed for academics across Africa to come together and discuss their research. It is often the case that academics at universities in Africa end up meeting in the north rather than at home. An annual Education Forum in Africa would provide an opportunity for academics to share their research with each other.



Session 4: Case Studies on Efforts to Promote Academic Freedom in West Africa



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Azmi Sharom, University of Malaya chaired this session. **Hamidou Seydou Hanafiou**, researcher at the Department of Linguistics and National Languages at the Université Abdou Moumouni de Niamey provided a summary of academic freedom concerns in Niger. He reported that conditions deteriorated in 2007, when fighting broke out between the government and the Movement of Nigeriens for Justice (MNJ), a Tuareg rebel group. The presence of the military in the university and the sometimes shaky relations between military, police and students are issues that have had a strong impact on higher education conditions more generally. Dr. Hanfiou also noted that Niger is one of the poorest countries in the world, with resource restrictions seriously hamper teaching and learning activities.

Yunusa Kehinde Salami, Associate Professor of Philosophy at **Obafemi Awolowo University** began by defining academic freedom and university autonomy as a sum of the following freedoms: freedom for universities to govern themselves; freedom to appoint their key officers; freedom to determine the conditions of service of their staff; freedom to control student admissions and academic curricula; freedom to control finances and generally regulate themselves as independent legal entities without undue



interferences from the federal government and its agencies. Dr. Salami then described a history of the usurpation of power from the governing councils of Universities from 1978 to the present day, including instances of Vice-Chancellors being removed, lecturers being dismissed, arrested and detained, increased vetting of course content and inspection of lecture notes. Dr. Salami put forward a series of recommendations for reform within the higher education system which would have beneficial effects for academic freedom including the proposition that governing councils be authorised to appoint or remove the Vice-Chancellor and other categories of employee; and university senates given the freedom to determine curriculum content.

Babacar Buuba Diop, Professor in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at the Université Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD) de Dakar offered reflections on the question of university autonomy at UCAD. Issues relating to university autonomy were brought sharply into focus in debates surrounding the visit of the French President Nicolas Sarkozy to UCAD in 2007. The visit reopened discussions about the complex relationship between the university and administrative powers in Senegal and the past relationship between the university and the French Republic. Current discussions about academic freedom frequently centre around the presence of law enforcement bodies on campus and how best to deal with student protests. The 1994 legislation on academic freedom and university rights, adopted by the National Assembly in Senegal outlined the circumstances in which police presence is legitimate on campus. The second and third chapters of the legislation detail the rights and obligations of teachers and researchers. The day-to-day issues most affecting universities in Senegal are similar to those across the continent—in particular the phenomenon of massification alongside severe resource limitations.



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James Tamba Lebbie, Research and Teaching Assistant in Mass Communication at Fourah Bay College, **University of Sierra Leone** described conversations with faculty at his university in relation to academic freedom in Sierra Leone. Mr. Lebbie reported that many believed that the very structure of the university undermined its autonomy. In Sierra Leone, the President is the Chancellor of all public universities. Each university has a Pro-Chancellor appointed by the Chancellor (President) on the advice of the Minister of Education. The first Vice Chancellor and Principal (the chief academic and administrative officer of the University) are one and the same, and also appointed by the Chancellor on the advice of the Minister. That said, many were of the view that academic freedom for individual faculty members was not a serious concern. Lecturers are generally free to teach without fear of being reprimanded or fired. Faculty members were, however, able to provide instances where academic freedom had been curtailed. Mr. Lebbie concluded by detailing a number of measures recently put in place to promote academic freedom at the university, including the establishment of a teaching radio station for unbiased reporting on often controversial university matters like industrial actions by staff and students, violence and cults on campus, amongst others; the introduction of faculty assessment forms to be completed (anonymously) by students; and other performance assessments.

Discussion highlights

- At some universities there is a serious problem of students threatening professors, female professors in particular. Complaints in this regard are often not taken seriously.
- There is room to improve of internal communication strategies i.e. communication within universities themselves. Often universities are more effective communicating with the outside world than they are communicating with their colleagues in other departments.
- Discussion about the pressure academics face to accept consultancies. Some expressed the view that an academic's work is compromised if they are at the service of a corporate or other entity. However, another said that the only way he could remain a professor is by continuing to accept consultancies, as his university salary is not enough to support him.
- Cronyism is a problem in many universities in the region. Often there is not a clear path to promotion and career advancement will depend on good relations with the Dean and/or Rector rather than quality of teaching or research.
- In many countries in the region, academic associations, unions and students groups are so politicized that they are not taken seriously by university administration when they seek to engage on non-political issues. If an academic wishes to lodge a complaint about a day-to-day matter that is hampering their work, it is often a very low priority for these bodies to deal with such issues if they are working hard on political campaigns.
- One participant reported that the presence of NGOs on campus has sometimes been unhelpful. There have been instances of NGOs working to bring cases against professors on behalf of students using dubious methods for compiling information about allegations.
- An individual's salary and general working conditions affect their ability to fully enjoy academic freedom, even if such freedom is guaranteed under law. One participant expressed: "It is not normal that academics should live in misery. They are supposed to service their society but they are always short of money."

The days proceedings concluded at 6pm. Dinner followed.



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Workshop
DEVELOPING A GLOBAL FRAMEWORK FOR RESEARCH AND RESPONSE
THURSDAY, 16 APRIL

Session 5: Presenting a Draft Common Framework for Analysis and Response

Kwadwo Appiagyei-Atua, Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Law at the University of Ghana, chaired the first session on April 16. **Sinead O’Gorman**, Deputy Director at Scholars at Risk opened proceedings by presenting a draft common framework for analysing threats to academic freedom. The draft was developed by SAR and NEAR based on cases of scholars and universities from around the world. The document aims to identify the most common types of academic freedom concerns, classifying them by severity and matching them with possible responses at the local, national, regional and global levels. Participants were asked to test the framework against two case examples provided in the workshop materials and against their own experience. In order to test the framework, participants were asked to decide: (i) Whether or not the classifications make sense? (ii) Whether or not all important concerns are represented? (iii) What other responses might not be represented? and (iv) What new tools or strategies for response might be created?

After some preliminary discussion about the framework document, participants broke into two small groups to discuss the two case studies.

Session 6 & 7: Working Groups on Individual & Institutional Issues

Small-group discussions were built around the two case studies circulated in advance. Each group had a chair and a reporter. Participants were asked to read the case studies and to discuss (i) How/whether the elements in the case study were familiar to them? (ii) If they had experienced anything similar at their universities/in their countries? and (iii) How might the actors in the case studies have reacted more strategically?



Session 8: Discussion and Reports from Working Groups

Participants re-convened and Kwadwo Appiagyei-Atua chaired a discussion about the case studies. Discussion groups were asked to report back on their groups’ findings. Participants were also asked whether they would recommend any changes/additions to the common framework document.

Discussion highlights:

- It was generally agreed that significant police presence on campus was not desirable but is necessary as a short-term solution where there are violent protests.
- If a university has a good degree of prestige and a reputation for quality, it will often have more freedom to stand up to harmful interventions. This may mean that working to improve quality of teaching and research can in turn lead to greater university autonomy.



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- Several participants expressed the view that the rectors in the examples should have done more to engage government in discussion rather than immediately doing as they were told. Some questioned whether a process of curriculum review might have been used by the universities in question before simply giving in to the governments' demands. Others disagreed—sometimes there is little to no room for discussion on such matters.
- Most participants agreed that faculty associations should try to engage student groups in dialogue. It is often lack of information that creates frustration amongst student groups.
- In some countries in the region, academic staff members are routinely denied career advancement opportunities. Requests to travel to international conferences are frequently denied, even where funding has been secured by the faculty member for travel.
- Some argued that the presence of mosques or churches on campus is inappropriate. In some parts of the region, classes are interrupted daily so that students have time to pray.
- Self-censorship is a serious problem in parts of the region.
- It was agreed that wherever an academic freedom concern arises, the first step should be to gather the facts very carefully before circulating information about the concern. Next, the key actors should be identified and options for response carefully weighed up.
- Discussion about whether it is true that in contemporary Africa there is solidarity only within national boundaries. The attitude--“if it does not concern us directly let's avoid as much trouble as we can”--is becoming more widespread, according to some. How can we begin to reintroduce the idea of civic duty in a way that is relevant in a globalised world?
- Lack of job security and tenure can cause bitter competition within university departments can inhibit enjoyment of academic freedom.
- We need to work together to improve our universities' reputations so that students who have graduated can once again feel pride in being associated with their *alma mater*.
- More discussion is needed around core university values and how we can work together to combat the commercialization of knowledge.

As discussions closed, Dr. Appiagyei-Atua thanked participants for their valuable insights. Mr. Quinn added that SAR and NEAR will revisit the framework documents and will work to incorporate ideas and suggestions raised during the session.

Session 9: Proposed Follow-up Activities

Raymond Atuguba, Professor in Law at the University of Ghana, chaired Session 9. In advance of the workshop, the organizers invited comments on a set of proposals for follow-up activities that were developed by participants at prior workshops, including the workshop held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in October 2008. During this session, panellists described these proposals in more detail, after which the merits of each proposal were discussed and new proposals were invited.

Elizabeth Ayalew presented the first proposal on the establishment of an **African Academic Freedom Network**. At the workshop in Ethiopia in October 2008, a working group was formed to organize a network of academics and higher education leaders across Africa to build dialogue and activities related to academic freedom and university autonomy. Dr. Ayalew invited participants at the workshop in Ghana to join in discussions about how the



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network should be structured and who could join. She invited suggestions for network activities that would help to raise awareness about academic freedom issues in Africa.

Jonathan Travis invited participants to discuss the launch of a **global academic freedom e-newsletter** and ways to develop shared content, such as by inviting participants from different countries and regions to submit to regular contributions. In his view, a greater sharing of information across national boundaries about urgent conditions as well as best practices can help to strengthen respect for higher education values everywhere. Newsletter contributors might commit to submitting one posting every six months, or to monitoring local media and sharing reports of important events implicating higher education values, such as stories of scholars or universities under threat. In urgent situation, participants could also submit information to NEAR for use in **alerts**.

Robert Quinn presented the third proposal on SAR's efforts to create a **World Academic Freedom Survey/Index**. Mr. Quinn's starting point was that one major obstacle to improving respect for higher education values is the lack of consistent, quality information. SAR is conducting a research project to survey conditions in all countries with respect to five higher education values: access, accountability, academic freedom, autonomy and transparency. Mr. Quinn invited workshop participants to comment on the survey project goals and research methods. Participants were also invited to join the project as research partners with SAR, leading survey research in their country or in neighbouring countries. Research partners may participate in a variety of ways, including by completing an annual research questionnaire on conditions in the subject country; by leading opinion polling at their university or other universities; and/or by developing an annual or one-time narrative report on conditions in the country. Country reports will be combined to provide a world report on conditions for use by researchers, policy-makers and the public.



Ousmane Sène summarized a fourth proposal for the establishment of an **International Academic Freedom Day**. It was proposed at prior workshops that the UN be approached about establishing an "International Academic Freedom Day" to highlight the importance of academic freedom, institutional autonomy and social responsibility not only for the education sector but for all members of society. Like World Press Freedom Day, a day celebrating these core values would encourage greater public understanding. By emphasizing public responsibility for these values, it would complement and reinforce efforts to support education institutions and professionals worldwide, including the highly successful World Teachers' Day. It would be the day of an annual lecture on academic freedom and perhaps related teaching and student activities and events. Dr. Ousmane explained that a committee had been formed to solicit support for establishing a day in advance of the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education in July 2009 and for later submission of a proposal to the UN General Assembly. Workshops participants were invited to comment on the proposal and to help in seeking support within the university sector in West Africa and elsewhere.

Discussion highlights

- Ousmane Sène, Director of WARC, proposed that Babacar Diop join the working group for the African Academic Freedom Network. In Dr. Sène's view, given his role as



ombudsman at his own university, and his respected work to promote civil society, Professor Diop would be an excellent addition to the group. Participants agreed.

- Several participants addressed the question of resources. How can the network function effectively without access to significant resources? Resources will eventually be needed if the network is to do joint research projects or otherwise promote solidarity across borders.
- Several participants agreed that more discussion was needed on the content of the network's work and on its representative aspect. There was a discussion on whether the network would always be a virtual network or if there was a need for a headquarters/an office/a physical address. Others saw value in the very existence of a network—if we start out by developing relationships, we can work together to build content gradually. The network would help to bridge communication between academics in Africa working on these issues and those in the Middle East, Europe and elsewhere.
- One participant noted the importance of having the Academic Freedom Day be a day when most universities are in session.
- Language and other issues were raised in connection with the idea of a newsletter. Should the newsletter be multilingual? Should the newsletter exist in paper version as well? The latter might be possible if dissemination is decentralised and resources become available.
- One participant raised the idea of an academic freedom journal. It was agreed that a newsletter would be a good first step; a journal could follow after some time.
- Several participants raised questions and comments about the SAR Academic Freedom Survey. Does SAR realise that this is a difficult and costly endeavour? It should be done properly if at all. Researchers would need to be paid the correct rates, it will take a lot of coordinating and planning. However, it was agreed that if the survey can be done well, it will be an extremely valuable resource to researchers and advocates around the world.



Session 10: Develop Plan of Action

Esi Sutherland of the University of Ghana chaired this session. The session began with a discussion of new proposals, followed by a final discussion of all proposed follow-up activities and the development of a plan of action.

- One new proposal was for the **production and distribution of materials** to promote greater awareness of academic freedom issues on campus e.g. posters that lecturers can put on their doors, stickers for cars, or for students bags. This would help to engage people with the issues on campus. It was suggested that a **poster competition** might be a fun way to get students involved.
- There was a second new proposal for participants to work together to ensure greater **circulation of legal texts** and international standards on academic freedom such as the UNESCO Recommendation on the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel.
- There was discussion about innovative ways to encourage **production and distribution of materials towards awareness-raising**. Professor Kwadwo Appiagyei-Atua suggested that he contact his university's radio station and discuss having several programmes on



students' rights and larger questions of academic freedom. This would provide a forum for discussion, and raise awareness amongst students. Victor Dugga, University of Jos, offered to take the lead in working on the idea of a poster competition for students.

- It was proposed that membership of the new **African Academic Freedom Network** be extended. One participant suggested that the network include local committees or clubs where faculty discuss issues amongst themselves so that network representatives can see to what extent faculty at their own universities are informed about issues relating to academic freedom and autonomy. From the local level, individual universities could then link up with universities in the sub-region i.e. allow the movement to grow from the local to the national to the regional. Others agreed that network membership should be expanded. There was agreement that if several faculty members at a university were involved in a project like the SAR academic freedom survey, this would give them a concrete activity to begin with and to mobilize around.
- One participant expressed the view that in order to approach UNESCO about an **International Academic Freedom Day**, the network would need opportunities to meet and to put the ideas in a format that can generate interest. SAR and NEAR offered to work with the network to submit a joint request for the establishment of such a day, if desired. SAR and NEAR are currently working with partners around the world to submit this idea to UNESCO. It was proposed that Buuba Diop might be in a good position to lead the African Network effort towards a World Academic Freedom Day. It was also suggested that the organisers contact the Vice-Chancellor and the Minister for Education to ask for their support.
- Kwadwo Appiagyei-Atua and James Tamba Lebbie agreed to be the meeting's representatives for further communication on an **Academic Freedom newsletter** and **alert-writing**. Dr. Atua and Mr. Lebbie will work with SAR and NEAR to solicit contributions for a newsletter from academics in Africa.
- It was proposed that a sub-group of experts convene to discuss with SAR the methodology for the **World Academic Freedom Survey**. SAR welcomed the suggestion and hopes to hold such a meeting in the near future.
- It was agreed that SAR and NEAR would continue to work with network representatives and participants towards fulfilling the goals in each of the above proposals and would help in whatever way possible or appropriate.



In closing remarks, SAR and NEAR thanked all participants and co-hosts for the very fruitful and enjoyable discussions and expressed their hope that the meetings in Ghana and the prior meeting in Ethiopia would open doors to new and exciting partnerships and projects. The meeting concluded at 5.30pm. Dinner followed.