

2021-2022

Student Advocacy Seminars

END OF YEAR REPORT



SCHOLARS AT RISK
NETWORK

protection advocacy learning

About the Seminars

SAR's Student Advocacy Seminars provide university and college students with the opportunity to develop human rights research and advocacy skills through direct engagement on behalf of threatened members of the global higher education community, in partnership with Scholars at Risk.

The 2021-2022 Collective

- Roger Williams University, USA
- University of Nebraska Omaha, USA
- University of British Columbia, Canada (fall)
- University of Nottingham, UK
- University of Iowa, USA
- University of Oslo, Norway
- University of Padova, Italy
- Muhlenberg College, USA
- University of Dundee, Scotland
- Drexel University, USA
- Management Center Innsbruck, Austria
- Bard College Berlin, Germany / Open Society University Network
- University of British Columbia, Canada (spring)
- Ruhr University Bochum, Germany
- Metropolitan State University of Denver, USA
- Fairfield University, USA

A Learning Experience That Makes a Difference

Scholars at Risk Student Advocacy Seminars blend hands-on, real-world experience with classroom learning. Not only do students learn about academic freedom, international human rights standards, and transferable advocacy skills, but they become active advocates on behalf of wrongfully detained scholars.

Working in conjunction with Scholars at Risk's advocacy team, Seminars research country conditions and monitor cases. Students work and learn alongside an international NGO, including by implementing advocacy strategies specific to the most urgent needs of wrongfully detained scholars.

Over the past year, Seminars arranged meetings with government officials, organized social media campaigns, ran targeted petition drives, developed visual campaigns, and held public events. Each advocacy effort supports SAR in urging global action in support of these scholars, and in furthering its work, drawing on the plans, the assessments, and the recommendations from each Seminar.

"Overall, I feel like my identity as a scholar has changed through taking the Seminar...Often in school you get lost in the seemingly never-ending wave of assignments. There is never any wider perspective or goal. With Scholars at Risk and the Seminar, I was able to put learned skills into action and use that to motivate myself to do better."

A Global Coalition

2021-22 saw over 320 students from 16 unique Seminars in North America and Europe working on 10 cases from China to Central Europe to the Middle East. Throughout the year, students discovered the value of collaboration—sharing ideas, resources, and advocacy plans; as well as attending virtual presentations with invited guests and speakers.

Using the Discord communication platform, students had the ability to reach out to one another and initiate dialogue. For example, a post from a student at University of Oslo concerning their work on detained Belarusian students became a collective conversation between students from University of Padua, Ruhr University Bochum, University of Dundee, and University of British Columbia. Students further amplified each other's public advocacy efforts by supporting and following fellow Seminars on social media.

Through collaborating with other Seminars, students learned and discovered the power of building coalitions across borders, engaging with other perspectives, and understanding the different geopolitical relationships and approaches to advocacy.



Poster created by Muhlenberg College Seminar



Scholars in Prison

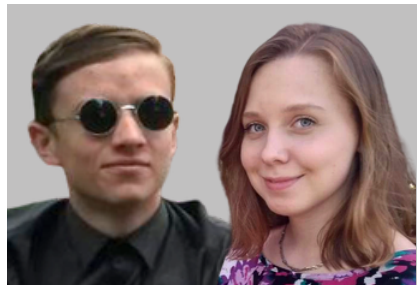
SAR's Scholars in Prison Project drives advocacy efforts on behalf of these scholars and students.

Its goals are to garner public support within and outside the higher education community; to urge state authorities to uphold legal obligations related to humane treatment and due process; to send a message to those imprisoned that they are not forgotten, but, rather, have the backing of an international community of colleagues and friends; and ultimately to secure their release.

SAR's Student Advocacy Seminars advocate on behalf of these imprisoned scholars.



Abdul Jalil Al-Singace
BAHRAIN, Mechanical Engineering



Maryja Rabkova, Yavor Kanetski
BELARUS, Detained Students



Ilham Tohti
CHINA, Economics



Rahile Dawut
CHINA, Uyghur Studies

SCHOLARS IN PRISON (CONT.)



Ahmed Samir Santawy

EGYPT, Sociology & Social Anthropology



Patrick George Zaki

EGYPT, Women & Gender Studies



Gokarakonda Naga Saibaba

INDIA, English Literature



Ahmadreza Djalali

IRAN, Disaster Medicine



Niloufar Bayani

IRAN, Biology



Nasser bin Ghaith

UAE, Economics

Seminar Highlights 2021-2022



Roger Williams University

Robert Cole, Communication Studies

Cases: Maryja Rabkova & Yahor Kanetski;
Ilham Tohti & Rahile Dawut; Nasser bin Ghaith;
Patrick George Zaki

Encouraged Sen. Jack Reed to advocate within the US government for Nasser bin Ghaith.



University of Nebraska, Omaha

Janet Reilly, Political Science

Cases: Ilham Tohti & Rahile Dawut

Raised awareness through social media campaigns and podcasts.



University of Nottingham

Zinat Jimada, Human Rights Law Centre

Cases: Abdul Jalil Al-Singace

In conjunction with European Student Advocacy Days, organized a conference on human rights and dissidents in Bahrain.

SEMINAR HIGHLIGHTS (CONT.)



University of Iowa

Amy Weismann, Center for Human Rights

Cases: Ilham Tohti & Rahile Dawut

Following US Student Advocacy Days, engaged with and encouraged the Iowa Congressional Delegation to mobilize action through diplomacy.



University of Oslo

Peris Sean Jones, Norwegian Centre for Human Rights, Faculty of Law

Cases: Maryja Rabkova & Yahor Kanetski;
Ahmed Samir Santawy; Nasser bin Ghaith

Through visual campaigns and in-person events, worked to encourage coalition-building across organizations within Oslo.



University of Padova

Francesca Helm & Claudia Padovani, Political Science, Law and International Studies

Cases: Maryja Rabkova & Yahor Kanetski

Presented a student manifesto on academic freedom at "Libertas: Spaces and Practices of Academic Freedom," a conference marking the university's 800th year.

SEMINAR HIGHLIGHTS (CONT.)



Muhlenberg College

Brian Mello, Political Science; Center for Ethics

Cases: Ahmed Samir Santawy & Patrick George Zaki

Recorded a podcast episode on how students can support imprisoned scholars, citing their own case advocacy as an example.



University of Dundee

Edzia Carvalho & Harriet Fildes, Politics and International Relations

Cases: Patrick George Zaki; Maryja Rabkova & Yahor Kanetski; Rahile Dawut

Worked with Chris Law, MP, to table an Early Day Motion before the UK Parliament in support of detained students and scholars in Belarus.



Drexel University

Rebecca Clothey, Global Studies; Education

Cases: Rahile Dawut; Nasser bin Ghaith; Ahmadreza Djalali

Traveled to DC to meet with Members of Congress, participate in advocacy workshops with other Seminars, and learn about Uyghur culture.

SEMINAR HIGHLIGHTS (CONT.)

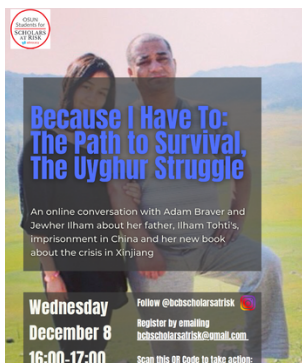


Management Center Innsbruck

*Belachew Gebrewold & Regina Obexer,
Department and Studies of Social Work and
Social Policy*

Cases: Ahmed Samir Santawy

As part of European Student Advocacy Days, gave a presentation on the political and human rights situation in Egypt.

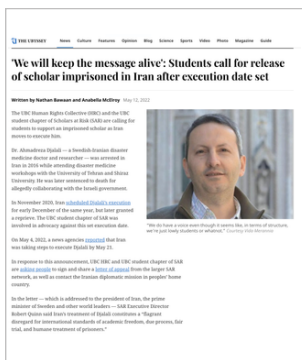


Bard College Berlin/Open Society University Network

Kerry Bystrom, English; Human Rights

Cases: Ilham Tohti & Rahile Dawut

Hosted an event with Jewher Ilham, daughter of imprisoned scholar Ilham Tohti, to learn and develop advocacy strategies.



University of British Columbia

Lisa Sundstrom, Political Science (fall term)

Jenny Peterson, Political Science (spring term)

Cases: Ahmed Samir Santawy & Patrick George Zaki; Ilham Tohti & Rahile Dawut; Maryja Rabkova & Yahor Kanetski; Ahmadreza Djalali

In addition to on-campus and parliamentary case advocacy, planned and hosted the first Canadian Student Advocacy Days.

SEMINAR HIGHLIGHTS (CONT.)

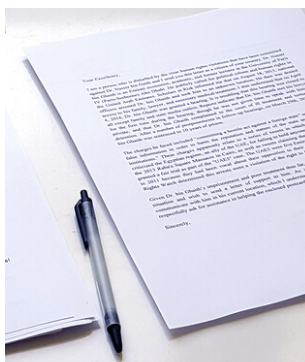


Ruhr University Bochum

Iris Vernekohl, Internationalisation and Global Engagement

Cases: Maryja Rabkova & Yahor Kanetski;
Ahmadreza Djalali & Niloufar Bayani

Partnered with the university's botanical garden to identify and plant a Persian tree, and created a commemorative plaque to honor unjustly detained Iranian scholars.



Metropolitan State University of Denver

Andrea Maestrejuan, History

Cases: Maryja Rabkova & Yahor Kanetski; GN Saibaba; Ahmed Samir Santawy & Patrick George Zaki; Niloufar Bayani; Dr. Abdul Jalil Al-Singace

Conducted interviews and case research on a wide range of countries and regions.



Fairfield University

Julie Mughal, Center for Social Impact

Cases: Ilham Tohti & Rahile Dawut

Supported on-campus SAR activities and shared case information with the Fairfield student body.

Student Advocacy Days

Student Advocacy Seminars also discovered collaborations through Student Advocacy Days. This year marked the expansion of the event from a single gathering held traditionally in Washington, DC to three regional events in Canada, Europe, and the United States.

Canada

Canada's virtual Student Advocacy Day on March 31, organized by University of British Columbia, examined the importance of solidarity, and equipped students with the tools needed to approach Canadian government officials on issues relating to academic freedom. Participants discussed advocacy challenges and opportunities in Canada, the Middle East and North Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. A highlight of the day was an insightful opening address by Dr. Shuchi Karim on critical solidarity in social justice and human rights work—a powerful reminder of why we engage in collective advocacy.

Europe

In Europe, Ruhr University Bochum, Germany, convened the first-ever European Student Advocacy Days, which launched with a lecture on “Protecting and Promoting the Freedom and Courage to Think in Times of War (and Beyond): The Role of Universities and University Networks.” A series of virtual events followed with other European university partners, bringing together students to present on their own work, for training on best practices in advocacy, and to engage in many opportunities for scientific and student exchange.

STUDENT ADVOCACY DAYS (CONT.)

United States

SAR convened 31 students and faculty in Washington, DC on April 7 and 8 for the first in-person US Student Advocacy Days since 2019. Students from Drexel University, Muhlenberg College, Roger Williams University, and the University of Iowa held 17 meetings with Members of Congress regarding wrongfully imprisoned scholars Ahmadreza Djalali, Ahmed Samir Santawy, Ilham Tohti, Marfa Rabkova, Nasser bin Ghaith, Rahile Dawut, and Patrick Zaki. In meetings, the students first shared case history, described SAR's work, and explained why they, as students, care about these scholars' well-being. Then, presenting specific recommendations, they asked their representatives to act in support of these scholars, too.



Get Involved

Start a Student Advocacy Seminar on your campus today.

Student Advocacy Seminars are available to all SAR member institutions. To learn more, contact SAR's Student Advocacy Seminar Coordinator Adam Braver at adam.braver@nyu.edu.