






SCHOLARS AT RISK
NETWORK  ITALY SECTION

ANNUAL REPORT
2020

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Executive Summary

SAR Italy is a partnership between Italian higher education institutions, research centres and scientific associations and Scholars at Risk, an international network of higher education institutions aimed at fostering the promotion of academic freedom and protecting the fundamental rights of scholars across the world.

[SAR Italy](#) was officially launched on 19th February 2019, when the first national assembly was also held with 14 member universities. At the end of 2020 the network had 26 members. In 2019-2020 the network was coordinated by the Universities of Padova and Trento and the Steering Committee which included Scuola Normale Superiore, Università di Cagliari, Università di Padova, Università di Trento e Università di Trieste. The activities of SAR Italy are organized around four pillars: Protection, Advocacy, Research and Learning, Network and Local Activities.

Protection

Despite the challenges that COVID-19 presented, in 2020 SAR Italy started to host 8 scholars at the Universities of Trento (three 12+12 month research fellowships), Padova (one 12-month fellowship and one 3-month visiting), Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa (12 month contract), University of Milano (3 month visiting at-risk professor), Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna (3 months). A vademecum/guide is being developed providing information on hosting procedures.

Advocacy

SAR Italy is present in the European Coordinating Committee for Academic Freedom Advocacy, the primary vehicle for strategic cooperation across Europe. A **Student Advocacy Seminar** was run at the University of Padova and a **Legal Clinic** at the University of Torino. Advocacy work has intensified in 2020, with petitions and advocacy for the scholar **Ahmad Reza Djalali** and the student **Patrick Zaki**. Belarus was also the subject of advocacy work.

Research and Learning

SAR Italy's first **Speaker Series** ran in autumn 2020 with a very well attended inaugural round table (171 participants) in September and three online seminars in the following months. SAR Italy was also presented at various national and international events such as ESOF and European Researchers' Night. Member universities also organized many events related to academic freedom.

Networks and local synergies

Networking activities have been established with partnering institutions and organizations on regional and national levels. Most SAR Members have signed the **UNHCR's [Manifesto for Inclusive Universities](#)** and participate in activities related to this organized by UNHCR. Many are also members of the **[RUniPace](#)** network promoted by the CRUI, Italian Conference of Rectors. A close collaboration has been established with CRUI on advocacy work and with the aim of establishing a national hosting programme.

Introduction to SAR Italy

SAR Italy is a partnership between Italian higher education institutions, research centres and scientific associations and Scholars at Risk, an international network of higher education institutions aimed at fostering the promotion of academic freedom and protecting the fundamental rights of scholars across the world.

[SAR Italy](#) was officially launched at the University of Padova on 19th February 2019 under the initiative of the University of Padova and the University of Trento. On this occasion, the first national assembly was also held with 14 member universities. In constituting SAR Italy, the governance structures of adhering institutions, as well as researchers, educators, students and administrative personnel send a strong message of solidarity to scholars and institutions that experience situations whereby their academic freedom is at stake, and their research, educational and ‘third mission’ activities are constrained. Coming together in SAR Italy, the adhering institutions commit to concretely contributing to the promotion and protection of academic freedom, alongside over 500 other higher education institutions in 40 countries in the world.

The aims of SAR Italy are:

- a. Promoting the values, aims and activities of SAR.
- b. Sharing best practices in terms of hosting, protection, awareness-raising, research and education on themes related to SAR’s mission.
- c. Planning and carrying out joint activities on protection, advocacy, education and research.
- d. Advocating and lobbying for SAR at the national level.
- e. Activating fund-raising projects with external partners (public and private) who share SAR’s founding values.
- f. Promoting the hosting and integration of at-risk scholars in Italian universities and research institutes.
- g. Representing SAR Italy in the SAR international network.

Read the full [Terms of Reference](#)

Coordination and Networking

Coordination (2019-2021)

Università di Trento, Ester Gallo (ester.gallo@unitn.it)

Università di Padova, Claudia Padovani (claudia.padovani@unipd.it; francesca.helm@unipd.it)

Steering Committee (2019-2021)

Scuola Normale Superiore, Lorenzo Bosi (lorenzo.bosi@sns.it)

Università di Cagliari, Gianmario Demuro (gianmario.demuro@unica.it)

Università di Trieste, Roberta Altin (roberta.altin@units.it) e Carla Savastano (carla.savastano@units.it)

Università di Padova

Università di Trento.

Membership

At the launch of SAR Italy, fourteen universities signed the Founding Statement. By the end of the year twenty Italian universities or research institutions had become members of SAR International. In 2020 the network grew further with six new members, which also include academic associations.

2019 Members

Istituto Universitario Europeo, Magna Charta Observatory, SISSA - Scuola Internazionale Superiore di Studi Avanzati – Trieste, Scuola Normale Superiore, Università di Bologna, Università di Brescia, Università di Cagliari, Università di Firenze, Università di Genova, Università di Macerata, Università di Milano, Università di Padova, Università di Pavia, Università di Roma La Sapienza, Università di Siena, Università di Torino, Università di Trento, Università di Trieste, Università di Verona, Università Telematica Internazionale UNINETTUNO.

2020 (New) Members

Scuola Superiore di Catania, Società Italiana delle Storiche, Università di Pisa, Università di Udine, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna.

Coordination and Steering Committee activities

The rapid growth of the network and the number of activities taking place under all 3 pillars of SAR have required strong coordination. The coordinators are also supported by two student interns, Cristina Mazzero at the University of Trento and Ilaria Berti at the University of Padova. The coordinators have been meeting almost weekly and the steering committee had 6 meetings. There is close coordination between the coordinators and the steering committee.

The Covid-19 pandemic caused all activities to move online from the beginning of March to the rest of the year. One General Assembly was held online on 1st July. The Assembly planned for December 2020 was postponed to 2021.

The coordinators report to and coordinate with SAR International Advisory Committee, attending the annual meeting. Ester Gallo attended the meeting on 14 May, 2020.

One of the main activities of the coordinators has been to deal with enquiries and information requests from those expressing interest in SAR and new members.

The coordinators lead on SAR Italy's advocacy work which has grown enormously in the last year, above all due to the situations which are emerging in nearby countries and the activation of students and other associations in Italy (Belarus and Turkey in particular). Claudia Padovani is member of the newly constituted new **European Coordinating Committee for Academic Freedom Advocacy**. The coordinators are also maintaining contacts with important figures for advocacy work, in particular Senator Elena Cattaneo, Italian MEPs and CRUI.

The coordinators collaborate with other national sections of SAR. In 2020 meetings were held with SAR Sweden in the context of Swetaly and advocacy for Dr Djalali. SAR Italy also met with members of SAR International in Greece, who are planning to set up a national section.

Steering Committee Meetings and General Assembly

3 February 2020 Steering Committee

24 April 2020 Steering Committee

4 June 2020 Steering Committee

1 July 2020 **General Assembly**

30 September 2020 Steering Committee

3 November 2020, Meeting of steering committee with Prof. Maurizio Tira, CRUI - Internazionalizzazione

11 November 2020 Steering Committee

2 December 2020 Steering Committee

Working Groups

During the 2019 National Assembly (Trento, 11th December), **three working groups** were established to work concretely on specific activities and involve SAR members other than those in the steering committee in SAR Activities. Members of the steering committee are involved in each of the working groups:

1. Hosting and support

Referent of the working group: Carla Savastano (UniTS) carla.savastano@amm.units.it

Working group's members:

UniPD: Elisa Gamba, Chaira Crozzoletti, Sara Pennicino

UniFI: Ivana Acocella

UniPV: Alberto Forte, Anna Claudia Mosconi, Andrea Pichelli, Axel Berkofsky

Scuola Normale Superiore - Pisa: Daniele Altamore

UniTO: Barbara Gagliardi, Manuela Consito

UniTN: Paola Bodio

Mandate

Identification of the necessary legal and administrative procedures to launch Calls addressed to Academics at risk, those with a refugee status or a SAR at risk-certificate or asylum seekers.

Identification of necessary basic hosting pre-requisites for the hosting Departments of the Universities

Activities

The first meetings explored the hosting situation in the participating Universities, with the presentation of both concrete cases already experienced and existing documents or welcome guides. The hosting of both students and scholars was discussed and it was decided to collect the documents existing in the Universities involved in the Work Group.

In the following meetings the content of the hosting documents was gradually defined. A meeting with some SAR scholars now in Italy was organized, in order to collect direct experiences on their arrival in Italy, particularly on critical administrative, bureaucratic and personal issues.

The need for SAR Italy Guide/vademecum for hosting was identified and a draft document has been submitted to the steering committee.

Critical elements

Existence of welcome guide/booklets/vademecum at the Universities, which are the results of delicate agreements and shared procedures with Local Authorities and Police Headquarters.

The SAR document must not overlap or conflict with those existing documents.

Future strategies

- Preparation of a welcome guide with the aim of creating a mentoring system for Academics at risk in Italy.
- Finalization of a Vademecum for Hosting Universities on how to host, covering the following areas: *Pre-arrival support (hosting agreement, contract, visa, space, permit of stay,

logistic, admin and health); support during the stay (wellbeing, psychological, welcome at hosting institution, meeting different groups of admin and staff, university services, mentoring (study and publishing), Training (language, career progress, project writing and networking); preparation of future steps (position inside or outside academia, new SAR position, return home, apply for asylum).

- Preparation of a Vademecum for Scholars at risk coming to Italy

2. Outreach and lobbying

Referent of the working group: Ester Gallo (UnTrento, ester.gallo@unitn.it) and Gianmario Demuro (gianmario.demuro@unicagliari.it).

Working group members:

Scuola Normale Superiore: Sevgi Dogan

UniFirenze: Alberto Tonini

UniPadova: Claudia Padovani

UniPavia: Antonella Forlino

UniRoma 'La Sapienza': Claudia Fiorani

UniVerona: Emanuela Gamberoni

Mandate

The aim of WG2 in 2020 was to:

- Identify the main national protection programs adopted at international level (Europe, US, Canada), and the related good practices and challenges.
- Build a collaboration with the National Conference of Italian Rectors (CRUI) as the consultation body on issues related to academic freedom;
- With CRUI, to develop a dialogue with the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) and with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI) towards the establishment of a national funding program for fellowships dedicated to at-risk scholars;
- Construct a collaboration with relevant national institutions, such as the Senate of the Republic Commission for Human Rights;
- Identify local, regional and national funds to support research scholarships for scholars at risk.

Activities

The group, with the support of SAR Italy National Assembly, initiated a dialogue with the Coordinator of the CRUI International Affairs Commission, Prof. Maurizio Tira. The aim was to identify different levels of potential collaboration between CRUI and SAR Italy in the fields of

protection, advocacy and training/dissemination. To this end, under the invitation of CRUI and in collaboration with the Steering Committee, the group worked on a first draft proposal for a National Program of Fellowship for at-risk scholars: the document was sent to CRUI International Affairs Commission in November 2020 with the aim to present it to the attention to MIUR and MAECI.

The group also involved two members of the Senate of the Republic Commission for Human Rights, namely Sen.ce Elena Cattaneo and Sen.ca Paola Binetti, in events such as SAR Italy Speaker Series. This constituted an important occasion to make the work of SAR Italy more visible to institutional representatives and to enhance the Commission's awareness of the experiences of displaced scholars who have been hosted by different SAR Italy universities.

Finally, fundraising activities have involved a preliminary dialogue with national and regional banking foundations, specifically the Associazioni di Casse di Risparmio Spa (ACRI) and the Consulta delle Fondazioni Bancarie del Triveneto. This, with the intent to establish collaboration protocols and to make available resources for universities aiming at activating protection programs.

Future Strategies

The objectives for 2021-2022 include:

- In collaboration with WG1, facilitate the necessary administrative procedures related to the incoming of at-risk scholars and their families (contract, visa, work permit) in collaboration with CRUI, MIUR and MAECI.
- Finalise and implement a National Program of Fellowship for at-risk scholars;
- Develop a collaboration with students' consultation bodies and unions;
- Enhance further a collaboration with the Senate of the Republic Commission for Human Rights on specific activities related to the protection of academic freedom and to advocacy campaigns;
- Establish a dialogue with national/international organisations/foundations like Amnesty International, Giuristi Democratici and the Kennedy Foundation Human Rights.
- Develop further fundraising activities with private foundations at national and regional level.

3. Partnership and synergies at Italian level.

Referent of the working group: Roberta Altin (UniTS) raltin@units.it

Working group's members:

Lorenzo Bosi (SNS)

Matteo Buffa e Isabel Fanlo Cortes (UniGe)

Francesco Castelli , Carlo Alberto Romano (UniBrescia)

Gabriele Tomei (UniPisa)

Isolde Quadranti & Elena Lucia Zumerle (UniVerona)

Donata Borgonovo Re (UniTrento)

Rachele De Giuseppe, Annarita Calabrò e Emanuela Dal Zotto (UniPavia)

Martina Ambrogi (Scuola IMT Alti Studi Lucca)

Lucia Piani (Università di Udine)

Mandate

To develop a constructive dialogue with organizations/networks in Italy dealing with the reception and hospitality of refugee students (UNHCR Manifesto of Inclusive Universities) and activities aimed at peace and promotion of human rights (Network of Universities for Peace - RUNIPace) in order to implement or coordinate initiatives and to avoid duplication and dispersion of resources.

Aims

Mapping of the experiences and practices of hospitality in the different Italian universities, and construction of synergies for the realization of a 'How to host' guide/ vademecum (see group 1). Common strategies and collaborations with other networks or associations.

Activities

Monitoring of activities, partnerships and networks already active in the universities involved, gathering concrete information (stakeholders, functions, agreements, Mou, drafts or copies of conventions, etc.). All documentation was uploaded to the shared drive updated in February 2021.

Network synergies tend to focus on:

- 1) hospitality system for students and refugee scholars / at risk
- 2) common objectives (scientific centres, advocacy, public engagement, defence of human rights, etc.

Critical elements

Extreme variability of different university contexts and governance regard to the reception of refugees. It is important to underline the specific mission of Scholars at Risk to avoid an approach of humanitarian assistance.

Future strategies

Continue the mutual update on the various local initiatives to implement information for the vademecum of Group 1; activate common working tracks and initiatives with RuniPace, UNHCR, Amnesty etc. with concrete proposals.

Report of SAR Italy Activities

The activities of SAR Italy are organized around five pillars: Protection, Advocacy, Research and Learning, Network and Local Activities and Other Initiatives.



Protection

SAR's core protection work provides direct assistance to threatened scholars, including by arranging temporary research and teaching positions at SAR member institutions and a range of other services.

Several scholars present in Italy with refugee status or at-risk if they should return to their home countries have contacted SAR Italy. An archive/folder with these scholars' profiles has been created and shared amongst the network so that information can be shared with them as opportunities for them within universities (e.g. calls for research or teaching positions).

Despite the challenges to mobility posed by Covid-19, in 2020 SAR started to host 7 scholars. Several different approaches have been developed.

- ✓ **University of Trento:** The project "Temporary Protection Project SAR-UniTrento" has been promoted by the University. It offers two 12 month research fellowships (Assegni di ricerca) renewable for an additional year and opened to the 13 Departments of the University. After the publication of the [call](#) in 2019 and the subsequent selection of two scholars at risk, the University of Trento selected and welcomed 1 Yemeni female researcher from the field of Biochemistry and Nutrigenomics and 1 researcher from the field of Humanities (anonymous origins) in January and in August 2020. The University provides free accommodations for the researchers and their families. In 2020 it also welcomed a scholar from the Middle-East in the field of STEM with an additional 24 month fellowship.
The project involved University Executive Office, Equality & Diversity Office, Welcome Office, C3A Centre Agriculture Food Environment, DICAM – Department of Civil, Environmental and Mechanical Engineering, Department of Humanities and Philosophy and CIBIO – Department of Cellular, Computational and Integrative Biology. It also was supported by the Autonomous Province of Trento – Department of Education, University and Culture.
- ✓ **University of Padova:** Since September 25th, 2020, the Department of Political Science, Law and International Studies (SPGI) of the University of Padova, in partnerships with [Scholar Rescue Fund](#), Centro Elena Cornaro, International Relations Division, International Research Office and SAOS, has started academically hosting a female scholar from Iran under the supervision of professor Claudia Padovani. The one-year scholarship (possibly renewable) is a research grant - type B and was co-funded by Institute of International Education - Scholar Rescue Fund (US), SPGI Department and Centro Elena Cornaro.

The SPGI Department hosted Asli Vatansever, previously funded for 1 year at the Department with SRF for 3 months (October 5th, 2020 – January 2th, 2021). Her temporary position involved an online seminar series entitled “Research in an Age of Uncertainty: Structural and Epistemological Challenges of Knowledge Production in Neoliberal Academia” which included 6 seminars held within different courses of the European and Global Studies course, and her participation in the SAR Speaker Series.

- ✓ The **Scuola Normale Superiore of Pisa** obtained funds from Regione Toscana and the Associazione Amici della Normale and started hosting a female scholar from Turkey in 2020 with a 12 month ‘contratto di collaborazione coordinata e continuativa’.
- ✓ **University of Milano:** In September 25th, 2020, the *Divisione Didattica e Formazione and the Ufficio Mobilità Internazionale e per la promozione Internazionale* of the University of Milano proposed a call for a [visiting professor "at risk"](#), as part of the activities of the University's "Accoglienza e Integrazione” table. A professor from Asia (already present in Italy with refugee status) in the STEM disciplinary area was selected and signed a contract for three months in October 2020. As specified in the contract he carried out 16 hours of training activities to be conducted continuously in the degree courses, master's degree courses or single-cycle degree courses and doctorate courses by 30/09/2021.
- ✓ **Scuola Superiore Sant’Anna** hosted a Turkish scholar for 3 months.

Lessons learned from hosting

The bureaucratic procedures for hosting have been complex and take a considerable amount of time and resources, and were further complicated by Covid-19. The ‘vademecum/guide’ which is being developed by working group 1 will be a valuable resource for Italian institutions intending to host scholars and provides information which is relevant on a national level regarding procedures.

An important aspect of hosting is the security and protection of the hosted scholars which needs to be taken into consideration at all times. Their visibility in social media and their identification as at-risk scholars may present security issues and repercussions for them and their families, particularly if they intend to return home. It is essential that hosting institutions and the scholars themselves are aware of this from the outset.

Other key issues in hosting are the provision of academic mentoring, support and friendship. The scholars have participated in several events including: the SAR Italy Speaker Series, the ESOF conference in Trieste in September 2020 and several online events organized by single institutions. The restrictions on mobility and universities’ move to remote teaching due to Covid-19 have strongly limited the networking opportunities for these scholars both within the single institutions and on a national and international level. However the individual hosting institutions have sought to create opportunities for the scholars to network with local colleagues and through academic organizations in the disciplinary fields of the hosted scholars.

To support the building of a community of hosted scholars, a day trip was organized to Verona in November 2020 which allowed the scholars hosted at different institutions to get to know one another.

Hostings planned for 2021

Several SAR Italy members have reported that they are putting in place mechanisms and calls to host scholars in 2021.

- ✓ **University of Roma “La Sapienza”:** The Department of Social and Developmental Psychology within the International Office, Rectorate, Academic Senate and Board of Governors, of the Sapienza University is preparing to launch a call in Spring 2021 for a 12-month research fellowship reserved to at-risk scholars, possession of refugee status, asylum or subsidiary protection status seekers, with the title “Pre-service teachers in pedagogy and research methods analyzing educational challenges faced by refugee communities.” The recruitment channel for the scholar, coming from Turkey and in the disciplinary area of Psychology/Pedagogy, will be SAR.



SAR International’s advocacy work aims to increase protection for vulnerable individuals by documenting the problem of attacks on higher education and seeking accountability of perpetrators in order to deter future attacks. In 2020 SAR Europe established a new **European Coordinating Committee for Academic Freedom Advocacy**, which is the primary vehicle for strategic cooperation across Europe. The Committee includes a broad set of key actors: representatives from human rights and related NGOs, universities, associations and higher education networks across Europe. SAR Italy is represented on this committee by Claudia Padovani. SAR Italy’s advocacy work is carried out in close cooperation with Denise Roche, SAR Europe’s Advocacy manager.

The organisation of **Student Advocacy Seminars** is an important part of SAR’s advocacy work. Seminar students develop research and leadership skills while advocating on behalf of imprisoned scholars and students identified by SAR’s Scholars in Prison Project. SAR Italy works in close contact with Adam Braver, Coordinator of SAR Student Advocacy Seminars. **Legal Clinics** are also a core part of Advocacy work.

Advocacy for Scholars in 2020

Ahmad Reza Djalali

SAR Italy has been advocating for Ahmad Reza Djalali since March 2020 when the student advocacy seminar started. This advocacy work intensified from 24 November 2020 when SAR learned that the

Iranian authorities had put Dr. Djalali in solitary confinement with preparations to carry out his death sentence. SAR Italy signed the appeal of FIDU (The Italian Federation of Human Rights) to HR/VP Josep Borrell asking the EU to take immediate action in order to obtain the suspension of the death sentence.

SAR ITALY sent a letter to Hamid Bayat, Iranian Ambassador to Italy, urging him to call on the appropriate authorities to immediately release Dr. Djalali on medical parole and compassionate grounds. Many SAR Italy members also sent appeals and published them on their institutional websites (see [article](#)). CRUI, the Italian Conference of Rectors also sent [a letter to the Iranian authorities](#) calling for the immediate release of Dr Djalali.

SCHOLARS AT RISK

NETWORK  ITALY SECTION

Scholars at Risk (SAR) Italy
c/o
Claudia Padovani and Francesca Helm
co-chairs SAR-Italy, University of Padova
and
Ester Gallo
co-chair SAR-Italy, University of Trento

20 November 2020

To: Mr. Hamid Bayat, Iranian Ambassador to Italy

Your Excellency

We write to express grave concern for the health and well-being of the scholar Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali, who is currently being held in Evin Prison. We understand that Dr. Djalali suffers from severely deteriorating health and is at great risk of experiencing adverse effects of the coronavirus disease known as COVID-19. We respectfully urge you to call on the appropriate authorities to immediately release Dr. Djalali on medical parole and compassionate grounds.

We look forward to your reply.
Yours sincerely,



Prof. Claudia Padovani, co-chair, Scholars at Risk Italy
SAR European Advocacy Committee for Academic Freedom

also for
Prof. Francesca Helm, co-chair, Scholars at Risk Italy
Prof. Ester Gallo, co-chair, Scholars at Risk Italy

On behalf of Scholars at Risk Italy

SAR Italy coordinators contacted various Italian and European networks as well as Italian MEPs and senators calling for the release of [Ahmadreza Djalali](#), in particular Fabio Massimo Castaldo (Vice President of the European Parliament), Pietro Bartolo and Giuliano Pisapia who had all written to Josep Borrell asking to take action.

On European Researchers' Night Denise Roche SAR Europe's Advocacy Manager joined SAR Italy's event to provide an update on the situation as students from University of Padova presented their campaign.

SAR Italy took part in the 24-hour scientific and academic marathon organized by University of Piemonte Orientale and CRIMEDIM to support Ahmadreza Djalali on 9th December. Several SAR Italy members also participated in the event which saw over 150 speakers, including the University of Torino.

Patrick Zaki

The Egyptian student Patrick Zaki is a student at the University of Bologna in Italy. Shortly after his arrest the University launched a motion which was supported by several university networks and single universities. [Patrick George Zaki's arrest: the motion of the University of Bologna — University of Bologna](#).

In March 2020 12 rectors from Italian universities signed a [petition](#) drafted by SAR Italy in collaboration with SAR.

In December 2020, following the further pre-trial detention and reports regarding Patrick Zaki's deteriorating mental health, SAR Italy sent a petition to President Al-Sisi calling for Patrick Zaki to be allowed to await trial from his family home. Several SAR Italy members also sent the petition. See [report](#). The Italian Conference of Rectors also sent an [appeal](#) to the Egyptian president.

SCHOLARS AT RISK

NETWORK ITALY SECTION

Subject: Petition in support of Mr. Patrick George Zaki

To: His Excellency Abdel Fattah al-Sisi
President, Arab Republic of Egypt
Office of the President, Al Ittihadia Palace
Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt
Fax: +20-2-390-1998
Email: p.spokesman@op.gov.eg

Date: 23rd December 2020

Your Excellency,

We write on behalf of *Scholars at Risk Italy* to express grave concern for Patrick George Zaki, a postgraduate student at the University of Bologna who was arrested on February 7, 2020, and afterwards allegedly subjected to torture, in apparent retaliation for his activity as a researcher.

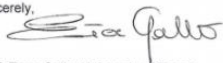
Mr. Zaki is a twenty-eight year old Egyptian student who came to Italy in August 2019, to pursue a master's degree at the University of Bologna. Moreover, he is a researcher for the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), an organization based in Cairo committed to defending Human Rights.

As members of our national network of higher education institutions, we are gravely concerned about the decision taken by the Egyptian Court on the 7th December 2020 to extend the pre-trial detention for another 45 days. As scholars and teachers, we deeply feel our responsibility towards students, who pursue their research projects with enthusiasm and commitment.

The health situation of Mr. Zaki is seriously compromised by the harsh conditions in which he is currently detained while awaiting for trial. Mr. Zaki suffers from asthma, and he is at particular risk if exposed to COVID-19 in the Tora Prison. In a December 12, 2020, letter to his family, Mr. Zaki expressed that he has serious backpain and his mental health is deteriorating. We therefore appeal to your role as the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt to consider this serious matter, and more broadly the humanitarian concerns that we all share in this health-emergency situation.

We urge you to grant Mr. Zaki the permission to wait for his trial at home with his family, where he could also recover from the physical suffering after many months of detention. We appreciate your attention to this important matter and we trust your understanding and sympathy for the dispassionate motives that guide us all.

Sincerely,



Prof. Ester Gallo, University of Trento
Co-chair, Scholars at Risk Italy and SAR International Advisory Committee

Also for
Prof. Claudia Padovani, University of Padova. Co-chair, Scholars at Risk Italy and SAR European Advocacy Committee for Academic Freedom

Prof. Francesca Helm, University of Padova. Co-chair, Scholars at Risk Italy

The University of Bologna has been very active in raising awareness of the situation of the student Patrick Zaki and has organized multiple events, campaigns and news stories. See the university's [page](#).

The Department of Sociology and Social Research of the University of Trento, in collaboration with the Italian Section of Scholars at Risk (SAR Italy), promoted a petition calling for the release of Patrick George Zaki addressed specifically to the academic community, which has been signed by many national and international Scientific Associations. (See [article](#)).

The following Scientific Associations have signed the petition letter promoted by the Department of Sociology and Social Research: American Political Science Association (APSA), Association of Comparative and European Public Law (DPCE), Italian Association on Political Communication (AssoCOMPOL), Italian Association of Analytical Psychology (AIPA), European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR), Gramsci Institute of Sardinia, Italian Society of Cultural Anthropology (SIAC), Italian Political Science Association (SISP), Italian National Association of Economic Sociology (SISEC).

Belarus

In October 2020 as the situation in Belarus escalated, SAR Italy was contacted and had meetings with Italian by representatives of the association SUPOLKA, Belarussian students in Italy and the following options were discussed: a petition signed by SAR Italy and CRUI; fundraising to support Belarussian scholars and students; fellowships and grants for scholars and students.

The rector of the University of Cagliari signed a petition presented by Belarussian students enrolled at the university. On the 27th November at the Researchers' Night event, the University of Cagliari chaired a panel on the situation in Belarus with students and scholars.

Lessons learnt

Initial advocacy work entailed SAR Italy consulting the individual rectors of member universities, as in the case of the petition for Patrick Zaki. This operating mode however is time-consuming and does not allow a prompt response from SAR to urgent situations. The steering committee subsequently established that for some initiatives they will take the responsibility to intervene immediately by signing calls directly. Closer collaboration with CRUI in adhering to petitions and circulating petitions has been established/is being discussed on issues which directly involve Italian scholars and students or those working or studying at Italian universities.

Student Advocacy Seminars

The University of Padova ran an online Student Advocacy Seminar from March to June 2020. The seminar was available as an elective, counting for 6 ECTS for students of the second-cycle degree in European and Global Studies. It was held online due to Covid-19 restrictions. 13 students took part in the seminar and worked on the cases of Iranian scholars Niloufar Bayani and Ahmad Reza Djalali. They organized an online event [Mobilitiamoci per la libertà accademica](#), wrote Wikipedia pages on the scholars, developed social media campaigns and contacted various political figures. Of particular relevance to SAR Italy's advocacy work are the fruitful contacts made with Amnesty Italia, and senator Elena Cattaneo. Students also participated in the Researchers' Night on 27 November, 2020. Plans for an advocacy day in Rome were abandoned due to the pandemic, but plans to organize advocacy days in Rome and/or Brussels in future remain.

The advocacy seminar saw the participation of many external partners: Adam Braver (Roger Williams University), Ester Gallo (University of Trento), Asli Vatansever (Humboldt University Berlin and University of Padova); Edzia Carvalho (University of Dundee) and her students Francesco Galdiero and Christoffer Nielsen; Nancy Postero and her many students (UC San Diego), Alejandra Gonza (Global Rights Advocacy/University of Washington) and student Shafina Khaki, Marco Chemello

(Wikimedia Italia) Riccardo Nanni and Rosie Burnham (Amnesty Padova) and Giulia Groppi and Annunziata Marinari (Amnesty Italia); Onorevole Luigi Manconi



Student advocacy seminar event, poster designed by students

Legal clinics

- ✓ **University of Torino:** The Law Department of the University of Torino, in partnership with SAR, Ghent University and Human Rights Centre, in the year 2019/2020 launched the project "Strategic litigation: International human rights legal clinic (IHRLC)" chaired by Professor Andrea Spagnolo.

The Project specifically dealt with the case of a Bahraini scholar, unjustly detained because of his role as human rights defender and political activist and the ultimate aim was to submit a complaint to the WGAD in partnership with SAR, that provided them with some useful insights and guided them in the identification of the most important elements to be addressed. The starting point of the group-work consisted in a research into the scholar's life. Subsequently, the team examined the status of human rights protection in Bahrain and collected any relevant literature and case-law. Finally, they analyzed the methods of the WGAD and the categories of arbitrary detention that it considers, with a view to strategically link them to the case.



SAR's research and learning work aims to increase security for scholars and universities by increasing understanding of academic freedom and related higher education values among states, higher education communities, and the public.

INITIATIVES BY SAR ITALY

SAR Italy Speaker Series

The Speaker Series was launched in autumn 2020 and a [calendar](#) for the entire series was shared with SAR Italy in September 2020. The Inaugural Round Table was well attended with 171 registered participants (including panelists).

Programme

Friday 25th September, 17.00 – 19.00

Debating Academic Freedom and Human Rights in Times of Crisis – Inaugural Round Table

Guest speakers: Asli Vatansever Humboldt University-Berlin and University of Padova, anonymous scholar, Albert Schram (University of Maryland Global Campus – Europe), Delal Aydin (Scuola Normale Superiore)

Speeches by: Maurizio Tira (CRUI Delegate for International Affairs and Rector of the University of Brescia), Elena Cattaneo (Senate of the Republic), Stefania Pucciarelli (President of the Senate of the Republic Commission for Human Rights) and Michele Telaro (UNHCR-Italy)

Chair: Ester Gallo, SAR-Italy co-coordinator and University of Trento.

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Thursday 15th October, 17.00 – 18.30

Guest speaker: Asli Vatansever, Humboldt University Berlin and University of Padova

Book launch: *At the Margins of Academia* (Brill, 2020)

<https://brill.com/view/book/9789004431355/front-7.xml>

Discussant: Magdalena Kmak, Abo Akademi University (Finland)

Chair: Claudia Padovani, SAR-Italy co-coordinator and University of Padova

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Friday 6 Novembre, 17.00 – 18.30

Guest Speaker: anonymous scholar

Title: The Biomedical and the Relational Model of the body, the Meaning of Illness, and Quality of Care: A Comparative Analysis.

Discussant: Sevgi Doğan, Scuola Normale Superiore (Italy)

Chair: Roberta Altin, University of Trieste

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Friday 11th December, 17.00 – 18.30

Guest Speaker: Albert Schram, University of Maryland Global Campus - Europe

Title: China and the West: institutional autonomy, academic freedom, and students movements in the Pacific

Discussant: Isolde Quadranti, University of Verona

Chair: Lorenzo Bosi, Scuola Normale Superiore

SCHOLARS AT RISK
Italy Speaker Series
Fall 2020



SAR-Italy launches its first speaker series in the Fall 2020. This cycle of seminars aims at promoting knowledge about present violations of academic freedom and at advocating for the rights of higher education members in pursuing research, teaching and education. This first edition will be online and will feature four scholars who have been involved in protection programs within Italian universities. They will discuss the situation of academic freedom in specific contexts as well as present their current research activities. The introductory roundtable and the individual seminars are open to all members of universities, public institutions, and national/international organisations. The working language will be English.

Remote via Zoom with registration

FRIDAY 25th SEPTEMBER, 17.00 – 19.00
Debating Academic Freedom and Human Rights in Times of Crisis
Inaugural Round Table
Guest speakers:
ASLI VATANSEVER | Humboldt University Berlin and University of Padova
SAR-Scholar from Africa
ALBERT SCHRAM | University of Maryland Global Campus – Europe
DELAL AYDIN | Scelta Normale Superiore
Speeches by:
MAURIZIO TIRA | CRIJ Delegate for International Affairs and Rector of the University of Brescia
ELENA CATZAMEO | IAC
MICHELE TELARO | UNICO Italy
Chair:
ESTER GALLO | SAR-Italy co-coordinator and University of Trieste
<https://www.zoom.us/j/9289141494>

THURSDAY 15th OCTOBER, 17.00 – 18.30
Guest speaker:
ASLI VATANSEVER | Humboldt University Berlin and University of Padova
Book Launch - At the Margins of Academia (Brill, 2020)
https://www.breidbooks.org/9789041115583/book_page
Discussant:
MACDALENA KMAK | Abo Akademi University - Finland
Chair:
CLAUDIA PADOVANI | SAR-Italy co-coordinator and University of Padova
<https://www.zoom.us/j/9289141494>

FRIDAY 6th NOVEMBER, 17.00 – 18.30
Guest Speaker: SAR-Scholar from Africa
Title - The Biomedical and the Relational Model of the body, the Meaning of illness, and Quality of Care: A Comparative Analysis.
Discussant:
SEVGI DOĞAN | Scelta Normale Superiore
Chair:
ROBERTA ALTIN, University of Trieste
<https://www.zoom.us/j/9289141494>

FRIDAY 11th DECEMBER, 17.00 – 18.30
Guest Speaker:
ALBERT SCHRAM | University of Maryland Global Campus - Europe
Title - China and the West: institutional autonomy, academic freedom, and students movements in the Pacific.
Discussant:
ISOLDE QUADRANTI | University of Verona
Chair:
LORENZO BOSI | Scelta Normale Superiore
<https://www.zoom.us/j/9289141494>

SCHOLARS AT RISK
NETWORK | ITALY SECTION

SAR Italy was presented at various national and international events.

3/9/2020 Panel discussion at ESOF (Euroscience Open Forum), organized by Roberta Altin and funded by the University of Trieste, called [Forced out, Welcome in: European Action for Researchers at Risk](#).

12/10/2020 [SAR Greece Section Building Workshop](#)

28/10/2020 University of Milan held an online seminar on ‘[Academic Freedom at Risk](#)’

18/11/2020 [Academic Freedom At Risk: Solidarity in Europe](#), online event organized by Sant’Anna

27/11/2020 [European Researchers’ Night](#). SNS, University of Padova and University of Cagliari organized a ‘staffetta’, relay of presentations to talk about academic freedom in Turkey, Iran and Belarus in a joint event, with direct testimonials from scholars and students

09/12/2020 [Scientific and Academic Marathon for Ahmad Reza Djalali](#), Università Piemonte Orientale and CRIMEDIM.

10/12/2020 Presentation of SAR at the launch presentation of the network RUNIPACE

SAR Italy Members have organized several events in collaboration with SAR Italy.

INITIATIVES BY SAR ITALY MEMBERS

- ✓ **University of Verona:** Together with the speaker Albert Schram, a lecture-workshop on student movements and governance of universities with reference to the case of Papua New Guinea was carried out during the academic year 2019-2020, as part of the course of International Law of the Department of Legal Sciences. This workshop followed an introductory meeting on freedom of expression in the academic field and a testimony on the situation in Colombia with the participation of students members of the Human Rights Committee of the University of Cauca. Link: <https://www.univr.it/it/iniziativa/-/evento/9149>
- ✓ **University of Trento:** The University of Trento collaborated with Open Society University Network (OSUN), Bard College-New York, and Roger Williams University to organize the intensive [Summer School](#) 'Human Rights Advocacy: Scholars at Risk'. The course involved 25 students coming from different countries and focused on topics related to academic freedom, freedom of expression and human rights, on introduction to advocacy and on the development of advocacy campaigns in support of Uyghur scholars and students currently detained in China. Students worked on different scenarios and planned strategies of awareness-raising and dissemination, in collaboration with different members of the academic, artistic and civil society community. Two students of the 2019 advocacy seminar from the University of Trento, Federica Tagliavini and Pietro Carra, joined the activities as tutors.



- ✓ **University of Firenze:** The University organized a monographic course about Turkey and the Kurdish issue. Delal Aydin, visiting professor at the Scuola Normale Superiore, held some lessons within the course of History of the Middle East at the School of Political Science, between November and December 2020. These lectures, taught in English, covered aspects related to the social and political struggle of the Kurds, including scholars and students, for the recognition of their rights as a minority in Turkey. They also addressed the changes in the strategy of action of the PKK from the 80s to today. A lesson was dedicated to the experience of Rojava and to female participation in Kurdish resistance.

- ✓ **University of Genova:** The Department of Languages together with the Research Office of the University of Genova, are coordinating the application of COST project "Communication, trust and strategies of resistance" with the involvement of various European partners, some of which are part of the SAR International network. The project, linked to the analysis of the social and media impact of crisis and emergency situations, deals with the issue of security, also from the point of view of academic freedom.
- ✓ On September 24-25, 2020 the Department of Italian and Supranational Public Law of the **University of Milano** organized a webinar called "Academic freedom under pressure? New State and Social Challenges in a German-Italian Comparison", with the collaboration of German universities in the framework of a German DAAD grant. The webinar analysed different profiles of academic freedom considering both legal and applicative aspects and also presented the activity of Scholars At Risk.
- ✓ On November 27, 2020, **University of Padova, SNS/COSMOS** and **University of Cagliari** in collaboration with SAR Italy, took part in a 'staffetta' on academic freedom for European Researchers' Night 2020. In the discussion, where students from the Advocacy Seminar presented their experience in the seminar and their campaigns, with a special focus on the case of Ahmad Reza Djalali, the rector's delegate for institutional communication, professor Telmo Pievani together with Denise Roche, Advocacy Manager for SAR Europe, took part.
- ✓ **University of Padova:** In 2020, the University of Padova in collaboration with CRUI, SAR Sweden and the Swedish Alliance of University Rectors, has been working in an Italy-Sweden project called "Swetaly University Collaboration", in order to organize a series of workshops in 2021 to involve universities from the two countries and to exchange experiences in terms of advocacy.
- **InspirEurope** 2019-2021. The Universities of Padova and Trento are associate partners in the [InSPIREurope](#) project¹ which is funded under the European Commission's Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions and coordinated by [Scholars at Risk Europe at Maynooth University](#), Ireland. InSPIREurope forges a coordinated, cross-sectoral, Europe-wide alliance for researchers at risk. The project anchors the excellent work already underway across Europe in support of researchers at risk, and lays the groundwork for a durable support structure in Europe. SAR Italy was present at several events.

¹ <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sar-europe/inspireurope>



Networks and local synergies

INITIATIVES BY SAR ITALY MEMBERS

Networking activities have been established with certain organizations and around themes and have been organized with partnering institutions and organizations on regional and national levels.

Most SAR Members have signed the UNHCR's [Manifesto for Inclusive Universities](#) and participate in activities related to this organized by UNHCR.

Many are also members of the Rete Università per la Pace ([RUniPace](#)) network promoted by the CRUI, Italian Conference of Rectors.

The universities of Padova, Trento and Verona have created synergies with the Shelter Cities of Refuge initiative and the network "In Difesa di"

- ✓ **Università degli Studi di Verona:** Participation at the press conference called for the motion "Verona city refuge", aimed to promote the protection of human rights defenders like other European and Italian cities (such as Trento and Padua). In fact, these cities, within the shelter cities network, are reference points for human rights defenders at risk, both by promoting opportunities for deepening and raising awareness on the issue. The University illustrated the initiatives carried out (or in progress) as members of the SAR network, as well as adherent to the Manifesto of the Inclusive University, Runipace and CUCS, in light of future synergies. The event took place on December 10, 2020.

On December 12th, on the occasion of the International Day of Human Rights and the presentation of the RUniPace Network, the University of Verona also organized a meeting addressed to local citizens and associations involved in the protection of human rights and the most vulnerable groups. The testimonies of Padre Zanotelli and Elda Baggio (vice president of Medici senza frontiere) were preceded by a presentation of the SAR networks, the Manifesto of the Inclusive University, Runipace and CUCS. The initiative ended with a direct dialogue with associations and institutions of the territory (more information here: <https://docs.univr.it/documenti/Iniziativa/dall/dall778471.pdf>).

- ✓ **University of Trento:** Scholars at Risk UniTrento collaborated with the network 'In difesa di' ('In defense of') to organize a seminar on projects of protection for threatened journalists, scholars and activists. The event was entitled '[Trentino for Human Rights. Protection and reciprocity to defend human rights defenders](#)' and took place on November 19th – 21st, 2020. At-risk scholars hosted at the University of Trento joined the seminar to present their experience and discuss academic freedom and freedom of expression in their home countries.

On a regional level there is informal cooperation between universities in the Tuscany region

- ✓ **University of Pisa, Scuola Normale Superiore and Scuola Alti Studi Lucca (IMT):** On December 10th, 2020, the Scuola IMT, on the occasion of the inaugural event of Runipace, together with the , hosted the event entitled "[L'impegno delle università per la costruzione della pace](#)".
- ✓ **University of Pisa:** In 2020 the University of Pisa launched a “Workgroup on asylum and migration” which will meet periodically in order to facilitate the access to Higher education, to discuss best practices and innovative ideas, to promote the joint participation in networks and funded projects at national and international level for foreign students.
The other actors involved are: ARCI Toscana, Ass. Africa insieme, Ass. Sante Malatesta, Ass. Unità Migranti in Italia, Caritas Pisa, Comunità di Sant’Egidio Livorno-Pisa, Comunità Valdese di Pisa, Coop. sociale Il Cammino, Coop. sociale Odissea, Medici con l’Africa/Cuamm. Alfea cinematografica, Ass. DiCA, ELSA Pisa, ESN Pisa, Limes Club Pisa.
- ✓ **University of Firenze:** In November and December 2020, the Department of Political and Social Sciences of the University of Firenze together with the **Scuola Normale Superiore**, participated in the "Monographic course on Turkey and the Kurdish issue" held by Dr. Delal Aydin, visiting professor at the Scuola Normale. The lectures, held as part of the Storia del Medio Oriente course, dealt with social and political aspects of the Kurds' struggle for recognition of their rights as a minority in Turkey, as well as changes in the PKK's strategy of action from the 1980s to the present day. Lastly, a lecture was dedicated to the Rojava experience and the participation of women in the Kurdish resistance.

Other activities

INITIATIVES BY SAR ITALY MEMBERS

This section reports activities that have direct relevance and implications for academic freedom. These activities are largely related to the integration of refugee students in universities, or issues that address the topic of freedom of research and the right to education, but are not directly linked to SAR Italy.

Magna Charta Observatory: the following events have been promoted by the Institution:
February 6th – 8th 2020, "Living Values of the University in a Globalising World": an international conference organized for 60 ° anniversary of Peoples 'Friendship University of Russia (RUDN).
September 18th 2020 - Webinar "What lessons are we learning from Covid 19?", organized by MCO. Discussion on how the pandemic influenced rights and duties of the universities.
December 15th 2020 - Webinar "Fostering sustainable development: the Role of higher education - plans, progress and values", organized by MCO in collaboration with IAU. Discussion on how high education contributes to favour sustainable development at the institutional level.
Collaboration with SAR in the development of the ‘Freedom Index’.

University of Milano: Since June 2019 the Osservatorio Nuovi Autoritarismi e Democrazie (NAD) of the Department of Studi Internazionali, Giuridici e Storico-Politici of the University of Milano has included a specific section dedicated to the diffusion and publicity of [Scholars At Risk](#) initiatives. The [Osservatorio](#), coordinated by Prof. Di Gregorio, aims to monitor, through brief but regular updates in a historical-legal perspective, the political-institutional transformations and socio-economic changes in countries located in the geographical areas of Central and Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Africa, China, Asia, Latin America and the United States of America.

UNICORE University corridors for refugee students in Ethiopia” is a project that deals with the creation of study paths and integration in Italy for young people with refugee status in Ethiopia. The universities of Bologna, Padova, Sapienza, Verona and Pisa. <https://universitycorridors.unhcr.it/>

University of Bologna: The University, in collaboration with the Municipality of Bologna, promoted “[Unibo for Refugees](#)”, a project aiming the integration of refugee students in the university world. Students will have the possibility of enrolling for single learning activities and Italian courses with exemption from fees; an opportunity to fill learning gaps and get a preliminary taste of the subjects awaiting them in the degree programmes. And, perhaps just as important, the enrolment will give asylum-seekers the chance to become part of the student community and to begin to understand how the university is organised and get to know what services it provides, its programme catalogue and teaching methods, thus enabling them to decide whether this is the place for them to reconstruct their future.

University of Pisa: In 2020 - 2021 the University of Pisa launched a project called “[Student Mentorship: towards an italian network of inclusive universities](#)” which aims to develop mentorship schemes recognized at institutional level within 10 Italian universities, thus facilitating and strengthening an Italian network of inclusive universities. The specific goals of this project are to institutionalise the mentorship model within universities, to strengthen the skills of student committees through capacity-building activities in the universities involved and to develop a tool kit encompassing results and replicable approaches and good practices to design or improve mentorship schemes.

Sapienza University in collaboration with Department of Methods and Models for Economics, Territory and Finance, International Organization for Migration (IOM), Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration of the Ministry of the Interior and Conference of Italian University Rectors (CRUI) has launched the project “[Mentorship in the Italian Universities - Support youth-to-youth for the integration of students with different background](#)”. This project was born from the experience of the European project "TandEM", promoted in 2018/2019 by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and developed in several European countries to support foreign university students. The objective is to sensitize the academic communities to the issues of social inclusion and intercultural communication, creating the basis for the implementation of peer mentorship schemes, or favoring their consolidation. Students will 'accompany' their peers in their path of access, integration and/or inclusion in the academic and social environment of the university, supporting them mainly in teaching, administrative-legal and social areas.

Since December 2019 **Sapienza University** has become the coordinator of the Strategic Partnership Project [UNI\(di\)VERSITY](#), builds upon the results of the inHERE project focused on supporting EU

HEIs' efforts to welcome refugee students and staff. The project broadens the scope of intervention in two ways, moving from a focus on sharing field practices towards sustaining institutional strategic planning, as this proved to be the most successful and sustainable approach to addressing such challenges; and expanding the scope of intervention to address HEIs' responsibility towards inclusion, in relation to the migration phenomenon impacting European societies.

The UNI(di)VERSITY project's partners are: EUA - European University Association, UniMed – Mediterranean Universities Union, Fundació Solidaritat Universitat de Barcelona, Campus France and IOM UN Migration.

University of Torino: The Departments of Cultures, Politics and Society (DCPS) and Law and Economic and Statistics “Cognetti de Martiis” and Centro CREtAM of the University of Torino, in partnership with Comune di Torino (Ufficio Stranieri e Nomadi), Associazione “A Pieno Titolo Onlus”, Associazione Frantz Fanon, Associazione Mosaico-Azione per i rifugiati, Centro Piemontese Studi Africani and Ufficio Pastorale Migranti have launched a project called “UNIT-EDU. Right to Education of Refugees and other projects for incoming foreign students.” This project, which was carried out in two editions, the first from November 2017 - March 2019 and the second from June 2020 to today, aims to protect the refugees' right to education and research by offering students/scholars support in order to face economical and social difficulties, psychological vulnerability and lack of funds.

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