

Conference establishing the Arab Society for Academic Freedom

Amman, Jordan

1 April 2008

Final Statement and Recommendations

1. To develop legislation and policies relating to Arab universities with the aim of improving government and private universities and strengthening academic freedom. This includes efforts at implementing already existing legislative schemes, provided that these schemes guarantee the principles and development of academic freedom.
2. To upgrade academic curricula and advance educational programs to ensure that students who graduate from universities may have the qualifications necessary to meet the requirements of society, national development and the labor markets according at the highest international accreditations and technical criteria.
3. To grant universities an important role in formulating the general educational policies, including granting universities autonomy over the subjects and courses to be taught; fixing transparent academic and ethical criteria for the promotion of university staff; formulating the policies of acceptance of students; and guaranteeing an equality of opportunity for acceptance in universities and higher educational institutes.
4. To combat the various aspects of corruption, particularly those related to the academic field, and to encourage the fair implementation of laws and policies to combat all forms of corruption.
5. To deepen the link amongst the Arab and foreign scientific associations for the purpose of upgrading and exchanging educational and scientific expertise and skills, and to recognize and safeguard for this purpose the freedom of movement, travel and work.
6. To develop the role of associations, societies and bodies to which the members of the teaching staff in Arab universities are affiliated, so they might better contribute to the improvement of the scientific and social conditions of their members and of society.
7. To identify the funding necessary to develop scientific research centers and specialized institutes in Arab universities, operating under a free scientific and research climate conducive to reaching the highest quality professional, objective, and scientific results.

8. To avoid intrusion of politics into matters pertaining to the curricula, acceptance and advancement of students, the appointment of the members of the teaching staff, including recognizing the importance of the principles of quality, honesty and transparency in appointment of members of the teaching staff, including by developing the autonomy of Arab universities in matters of scientific, administrative and financial governance and operation.
9. To develop a comprehensive database of the laws regulating higher education, research and academic freedom in Arab countries, as well as the statistics related to manpower development, with all its indicators and elements (i.e. population, education, rates of illiteracy, the networks of government, private and foreign universities, and manpower resources), including for this purpose through the use of modern information technologies.
10. To establish an Arab fund to support academics and to compensate them materially and morally when they encounter violations of their academic freedom; and, whenever necessary and practical, to work to create teaching, research, study or other opportunities within Arab universities for scholars and researchers who are refugees, exiles or otherwise threatened or unable to work in their home country, so that their talents, skills and intellect might not be lost but retained for the benefit of society.
11. To publish a comprehensive guide on academic freedom in Arab countries, to include fundamental principles and mechanisms, as well as training programs, and to distribute the guide to all the Arab universities.
12. To develop a wider understanding and acceptance of the principle of academic freedom, including immunity from sanctions for professional and scientific research, including where appropriate through developing necessary legislation or through the use of the media.
13. To eliminate all forms harassment and violence against Arab academics, including especially at this time to put an end to the violence against attacks on the academic community in Iraq, including the murders of numerous Iraqi scientists and researchers.
14. To support and encourage Arab initiatives to form associations and bodies for academic freedom in each Arab country and in the region.
15. To work toward each of these recommendations, and to report on progress in achieving them at future conferences of the Arab Society for Academic Freedom.

End.