



Summary Report on Academic Freedom Workshop Amman, Jordan, March 31, 2008

Scholars at Risk (SAR) and the Network for Education and Academic Rights (NEAR) held the first in a series of workshops on academic freedom in Amman, Jordan on March 31st, 2008. The workshop took place on the second day of a three day event organized in partnership with the Amman Center for Human Rights Studies (ACHRS) and hosted by the United Nations University (UNU) in Amman under the patronage of the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Jordan. Faculty and researchers from twenty-two universities (both public and private) across seventeen countries participated in the event. Representatives were present from Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, Palestine, the Republic of Yemen, Russia, South Africa, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates.

The first day featured a series of case studies on academic freedom in the participants' countries. Presentations highlighted the contemporary challenges that face academics and educational institutions, including issues of accountability, transparency, corruption and ideological pressure.



The second day was dedicated to the academic freedom workshop organized by SAR-NEAR. The workshop was the first of a series to be held in various regions of the world and aimed to build solidarity among scholars and institutions and to mobilize participants to develop practical proposals for responding to the challenges outlined in the previous day's proceedings. Workshop materials—including a framework document, hypothetical case studies and proposals for follow-up activities—were circulated in advance of the event and participants discussed. Participants critiqued current SAR-NEAR and other initiatives and outlined new approaches reflecting unique local and regional perspectives. The discussions provided valuable insights into the challenges faced by academics in the region and the coping mechanisms that individuals and institutions have developed in response to these challenges. Participant feedback indicated that the workshop served as a unique discussion forum and helped to demonstrate how participants experiencing similar problems might develop joint responses.

The event concluded with a day-long meeting establishing a new Arab Society for Academic Freedom (ASAF). The Society's mission is to promote academic freedom and university autonomy across the region. The participants elected a 25-member Council and an 11-member Executive Committee. In addition, the participants issued a 'Final Statement and Recommendations' summarizing their discussions and outlining issues for future research and follow-up activities. SAR-NEAR look forward to contributing to ASAF activities in the region and to ASAF's representing the region in SAR-NEAR's global activities.

For more information including a copy of the ASAF recommendations visit: www.scholarsatrisk.org or www.nearinternational.org.