Allan E. Goodman
El Hassan bin Talal Annual Lecture in Post-war Recovery and Development
The University of York
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Wednesday January 15, 2014 saw the sixth in the series of the annual HRH El Hassan Bin Talal lecture, with Dr. Allan Goodman, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Institute of International Education. Dr. Goodman was introduced by Deputy Vice Chancellor Jane Grenville, and the lecture was closed by Professor Sultan Barakat, Director of the (Post-war Reconstruction and Development Unit) PRDU. Dr. Goodman's lecture, titled "On the Rescue of Science of Learning", highlighted the importance of the work carried out by the Institute of International Education in rescuing academics who find themselves in danger in war affected areas, because of the work they are carrying out. In a lively discussion following the lecture, Dr. Goodman discussed the difficulties faced by the IIE in its daily work, as well as the different methods used to rescue academics. Dr. Goodman praised the work of the PRDU, stating the necessity of training experts in this field, possible through PhD research at the PRDU, and the MA in Post-war Recovery Studies.

Dr. Goodman’s Speech

RESCUE, OR ELSE THE DAY IS LOST

When this country's poet laureate noted in Sheffield that few earthly things are more beautiful than a university, he would have been very pleased to know that York hosts this lecture series and, especially, that it’s Post-war Reconstruction and Development Unit exists. For John Masefield was not only referring to architecture and green lawns, but also to the fact that universities are singular institutions in welcoming exiles, thinkers in distress and, by extension, in their willingness to save entire national academies. In York's case, you are often on the front lines, too, of helping them to rebuild. Given today's headlines, it looks like all of these activities are indeed needed more than ever.

It is an honor for any professor or official to be asked to deliver a lecture named after His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal. And I was deeply touched by the invitation. Prince Hassan
and I met nearly 40 years ago, when his highness was among the first to share with President Carter the realities that might imperil what Camp David had achieved, and again when he founded the Arab Thought Forum as a means to work against all kinds of fundamentalism. And we have all been enthralled by the exhibits he and Her Royal Highness Princess Sumaya have mounted to share with the world the beauty and mystery of Jordan's ancient mosaics.

The people who crafted such wonders in the 5th, 6th and 7th centuries, such as the Madaba Mosaic Map, made it possible for us all to know the scope of the ancient world, the enduring forms of nature that survived much tumult and destruction, and at its base, mankind's search for meaning and place in nature's universe.

Thank you, your Highnesses.

The topic of my lecture, alas, is a part of our nature that is under a constant and surprising degree of threat. This is the desire of some among us to dedicate ourselves to teaching and research. For nearly a hundred years, the Institute of International Education has rescued scholars. As the persecution of Socrates and Galileo illustrates, scholars have been harassed, threatened, imprisoned and killed for millennia. What is surprising to me is that the idea of an institution dedicated to the rescue of persecuted and otherwise endangered academics may have only begun with us.

The world of 1919, when we were founded, caused the historian H.G. Wells to observe that history was a race between education and catastrophe. At the time it was not clear who was going to win. In some regions today, that is still the case and scholars find themselves on the front lines of wars of religion, tribes, and other -isms – including anti-intellectualism – where ignorance so often prevails.

Now what has surprised me so much about our work in the Scholar Rescue Fund is the range of threats scholars today find themselves facing. I expected, of course, that the reasoned opponents of particular governments and political parties would be harassed, imprisoned, and otherwise silenced. This has always happened. But the attacks on scholars in Iraq have gone far beyond this and involved many malefactors. And the assassination of scholars has proved to be a particularly effective weapon of terrorists and armed sectarian militia who find that because of the extensive communities scholars serve – ranging from hundreds of students to thousands of patients in a clinic in the case of medical professors – killing them has far-reaching consequences. And in
other regions, we have seen political parties aim their violence at the most respected scholars regardless of discipline in order to silence entire universities or gain their acquiescence.

In all this, I must also confess that we have avoided grappling with what constitutes a fair definition of academic freedom. Originally, I thought it would be possible to develop an index similar to those developed to expose corruption and the absence of press freedom as a means of deterring attacks on individual scholars and their home institutions. So far this has not been possible, in part because we are so very busy. But at a more fundamental level, we had great difficulty actually defining academic freedom and especially doing so in a way that did not impose our values, presuppose that it could really only exist in countries of a certain means and history, or that appeared to condemn self-censorship and those who chose that path in order to advance research and serve students in their national academies.

What really sealed the fate of the effort was when I inquired of the American Association of University Professors if any of their members felt their academic freedom had been infringed. The answer was that the association was then processing over 1,800 complaints annually. If the incidence and appearance of threats to academic freedom was so apparently large in America, I concluded that perhaps all of us have a great deal of work to do before we had the standing to set standards for others.

As a consequence, at the Scholar Rescue Fund we have only two criteria when considering a case or request for help. Is the person a scholar? And what is the level of the threat they are facing? Level here is to us more significant than nature or source. Since we have limited funds, we aim to help those facing the gravest threats. That is why you will see that our tagline is "rescuing scholars/saving lives."

What have we accomplished?

It is important to say "we" here because many academies have rallied to our cause. SRF scholars are placed at over 300 colleges and universities in 40 countries, with more joining us to become partner safe havens every week. Each host also matches our grants – and sometimes goes considerably beyond that to care for the scholar and his or her entire family. To date, these contributions have totaled more than $9 million in addition to the $24 million in funds we have provided.

The results can perhaps best be illustrated by a few examples. A physicist specializing in laser technology was persecuted in Belarus because he did not want to use this technology to develop weapons. On an SRF fellowship at Rice University, he was able to explore medical uses, including most recently developing a rapid malaria test that uses a laser pulse, eliminating the need to draw blood. The technology can be used in a device powered by a car battery and is rugged enough to work in dusty villages. With a fiber-optic probe attached to a finger or ear lobe, the device could screen one person every 20 seconds for less than 50 cents each. If that happened, it could revolutionize malaria diagnosis and save millions of lives. And this same
scholar is using his expertise in nanotechnology to find a way of destroying cancer cells. If those experiments are successful, it will change the world.

Let me tell you about another physicist on our fellowship, again with a specialization in nanotechnology, but this time hosted right here in the UK. An Iraqi scholar, he worked with UK research partners to find a nanoparticle that could help with treating cataracts non-surgically. That’s not all to his story; he returned to Iraq and is now the president of one of Iraq’s leading public universities.

So – our scholars do return, and back home they often do remarkable things. Several years ago an SRF fellowship enabled a highly threatened Burmese scholar of public health to spend a year at a U.S. university studying the adverse effects of authoritarian regimes on public health. Widely known for a landmark book on medical ethics, he returned home recently to a remarkably more open country. In addition to his teaching, practice and research, he is fostering university networks, expanding health services and establishing a Burmese chapter of Physicians for Human Rights – basically helping to open up that country.

Our most current activities have focused on the emergencies in Iraq, Iran, and Syria.

The origins and nature of our work in Iraq has been recently documented in an article in *Science & Diplomacy*, a quarterly publication from the American Association for the Advancement of Science Center for Science Diplomacy. So I will refer you to "Lessons in Academic Rescue: An International Higher Education Response in Post-war Iraq" which was published in September. The only thing that has significantly changed is that we may have been premature in labeling the situation as "post-war." And perhaps the most important thing we learned, thanks to our partnership with the PRDU here at York and the Richard Lounsbery Foundation, is that it is possible to find ways to engage rescued scholars even when they are out of their home countries in the teaching and mentoring of students through various forms of distance learning and the importance to scholars of being invited to have conversations about what to do at post-conflict even if that seems very far off. Scholars welcome dialogue about rebuilding and to date nearly 45 percent have returned home to do just that on an institutional basis. We don’t push scholars to return to their country; that’s a very personal decision that scholars make. However, of the more than 530 scholars that our program has rescued in the past 11 years I have only heard one scholar say that she would never go back home. In her case, her husband was brutally murdered by terrorists in front of her while they were on their way to their campus. He was also a university professor.

Iran is a more classic case of scholars being threatened by governmental authorities who are also seeking to eliminate entire fields and disciplines deemed to be counter-revolutionary. With the retirement of the Ahmadinejad government, which greatly constrained such fields as sociology, philosophy, and gender studies, applications from Iran have noticeably declined. It remains to be seen how many scholars from Iran will now seek to return. In general from our experience, those whose disciplines were declared immoral or forbidden have more difficulty returning to
productive academic work in their home country. The Iranian scholars that we support, now nearly 60, are telling us that they are “cautiously optimistic” about returning.

Permit me to conclude by reading a short passage from a book entitled "The Rescue of Science and Learning":

"The lot of displaced ... Professors ... was indeed harsh. University employment was forbidden, and libraries and research facilities were closed to them. Many were incarcerated. One world-renowned medical scientist was taken into ‘protective custody.’..., while his youngest son was beaten in prison because pressure was brought from the outside to release his father.”

"The record of another scholar states: ‘He was removed from his Directorship... He was not allowed to use the library or museum, even though many of the most significant objects in the museum has been procured by him. Finally, all his property was confiscated, and he was obliged to borrow three thousand dollars from his friends to get out ...’"

I am quoting a memoir by the Institute's first president as he reflected on the work of the Emergency Committee for Displaced European Scholars who were targeted by the Nazis in the 1930s. But the striking thing to me about the narrative is that the same could be said today about the situations of the scholars in Iraq, Syria, and the many other places where the Institute's Scholar Rescue Fund has been called upon to act.

With Syria, our response has been to join with others in forming an international consortium to help. The IIE Syria Consortium for Higher Education in Crisis is a group of universities around the world – now numbering nearly 100 – who are trying to help preserve Syria’s intellectual capital by hosting threatened scholars and providing scholarships to displaced students. Seventy Syrian students arrived on U.S. campuses this Fall through Consortium scholarships, and our goals for next Fall are even more ambitious: 600 scholarships around the world, including many in the MENA region. In addition to our original partners of Jusoor, Illinois Institute of Technology, and the U.S. Department of State, we are now joined in these efforts by the Portugal-based Global Platform for Syrian Students and several other partners. IIE’s Syria Consortium, perhaps a new model of support for future academic emergencies, is being funded by the U.S. Department of State and Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Now, it is practically impossible to give any public lecture to an English audience without finding some incredibly apt reference to the situation being discussed in Shakespeare. And for me, Catesby in Richard III says it simply and best: "Rescue ... or else the day is lost."

In the work we do together, the stakes are very high. The burgeoning attacks on scholars in this century, as in the last, threaten in some cases entire national academies. As academics here today who are more fortunate than those facing the threats I have described, I believe we have a duty to rescue scholars. And perhaps we will want to be remembered for what we did in this respect and with whom we stood.