

Address by Dr. Henry Jarecki, Chairman, IIE Scholar Rescue Fund

CUMERC Speech 01.08.10

I want at this end of what I have heard was a very successful set of workshops to take you to the very beginning of our scholar rescue effort.

There are really three beginnings counting when IIE was founded in 1919; when we started SRF in 2002; and when we first came to Amman in 2006.

1919: IIE was formed and one of its founders, the American Secretary of State and Nobel Prize winner Elihu Root, expressed the hope that international education would prevent suffering and war. This did not exactly happen in the past 90 years, and its beneficial effects did indeed lead none the less to greater understanding, advances, and achievements, specifically through higher education.

In the course of IIE's work, we often found ourselves engaged in rescue:

1. Bolshevik Revolution
2. Mussolini
3. Hitler; Over 350, 21 before or after Nobel Prizes
4. Hungarian Uprising
5. Asian Currency Crisis
6. Tiananmen Square

Always, as the old minutes showed, via an adhoc process

- a. The event would happen
- b. We would form a Committee
- c. There would be discussion
- d. Fundraising would follow
- e. We would set-up a rescue program
- f. And then we would implement it.
- g. It would take 1-2 years and in the meantime scholars were often in exile or dead.

And so in 2002: We decided to setup a separate organization that would be ready when needed. We hired a few staff and one or two interns – and thought there would be a slow start, a few applicants from one or two countries, wow! Over the next few years we received over 1000 applicants from 100 countries and we had over the next years brought to safety over 140 scholars from 42 countries. Daniela Kaisth and I have just completed a book describing the first years of this program. We are introducing it at a book-signing ceremony in New York, on Jan 25th. I am giving copies to some of our earliest scholars like Professor Adnan and Professor Munther, we are leaving 5 copies at our office at the Royal Scientific Society and we are sending each of you by e-mail a copy next week. We are leaving 5 copies at our office at the Royal Scientific Society.

2006: 4 years later the drama in Iraq became more and more pressing. It was a drama the size of Germany. Would we be ready? Of course we weren't and so we have had to learn how. How to choose whom? How to fund – foundations, governments, other donors?

In this group, you all have been teachers, not only of your students, but you have also been our teachers. What have we learned?

1. Impact of persecution

- a. Loss of confidence in life and selves
- b. Need of community for tasks to be maintained
- c. Need by scholars not only of economic support but also of sense of accomplishment.

Inevitably, then, our goal in being here now is not only to express our admiration for how each of you has coped with adversity but also for the contributions that you are making to academic life.

I am impressed also by the way our scholars have seen the larger picture and have overcome petty sectarian concerns of identification and see themselves more and more as Iraqis and as a community of Iraqis scholars. I see you here as Iraqis in Jordan, Iraqis in Egypt, Iraqis in Syria, returnees to Iraq and even, thanks to Dr. Al Ajeeli's help, Iraqis from Baghdad – and all united once more. This unity points to our hope that the day may come when Iraq is secure enough for scholars to return home.

One element that will, I think, foster this is an effort about which I have spoken with many of you, namely, my hope that you will form an association. In the last year we have

started on this effort with episodic videoconferences with scholars in Amman which we discussed our project and asked for your advice on your needs.

Four elements stand out:

1. Your desire for additional training
2. Your desire for pensions
3. Your desire for help attending international conferences
4. Your desire for ID cards, especially ones that avoid the possible problematic reference to rescue.

We are fortunate that we have been able to meet all four of these requests

- 1 This conference is a direct result of your desire for more training.
- 2 Dr. Al – Ajeeli -- whose letter saying “Iraqis scholars are in danger” was the trigger for our effort -- will comment on pensions; I think you will be pleased with his comments.
- 3 We have, through access to foundations, governments, and private donors, found funds to help some of you attend international conferences.

- 4 And finally, we will in a moment now take a five or ten minute break to distribute the ID cards we have prepared with the Visiting Scholar designations you have asked for.

All of this came about because our colleagues have, in our meetings, expressed their needs. We want to do more but we want in return that you organize yourselves. When we re-convene in 5 or 10 minutes, I want to talk about what I think such an organization could be like.

But first I ask 5 of my colleagues to stand with the ID cards and give them out

- a. Mauro: letters A-E
- b. Leo letters F-K
- c. Julian: L-P
- d. Jim letters Q-U and
- e. Tom letters V-Z

ON RECONVENING:

We have done what we could to meet your requests but I tell you frankly we have acted somewhat in the dark. Is what we gave you what you wanted? As things stand today Janet Arici, Muhammed, Sally Soussou, and Nada have to ask 50-75 different people; inevitably, we will not do it quite right. We could have gotten there faster and perhaps more accurately if there had been an organization to represent you.

Such an organization could coordinate meetings both with colleagues here in Amman (we might even find money to enable you to do it over a good meal) or via video conferences with NY, Damascus, Cairo, and Baghdad. Such a group could disseminate information more often than once every month or two; members of such a group could learn how its other members were doing: what education and teaching opportunities exist; what experiences those returning to Iraq have had; what services other than host university teaching can be provided by our scholars? Our video e-learning initiatives are just one example. If you all can organize it, we could probably find funds to develop courses for young Iraqis here in Amman who need more educational opportunity. Could you organize some college education for some of them? Would the Ministry of Higher Education count some of them as university credits when those students come back to Iraq?

The members of such a group could help each other much like college alumni association members do in other countries. Such a group could help us develop new opportunities, such as a broader pan-Arab video teaching program and help us develop policies such as a 3rd year of partially funded fellowship in Kurdistan or a fourth year, if still needed, in Baghdad. These last are not offers: I speak only of ideas.

To make this happen I wish those of you who share this idea to speak with Nada Al-Soze and put your own name forward to help develop an Executive Committee. It is useless to tell us that Iraqis have no expertise with such an effort. By that logic, you

would discard the coming election and let autocrats or outsiders manage the country's affairs I don't think anyone would like that idea.

I want then on this note to close this meeting but, before I do so, I want to acknowledge the hospitality that we are always shown in Jordan and thank the many friends who have made this entire enterprise possible.

I would like to thank and acknowledge our great patrons in these efforts – HRH Prince Talal and HRH Princess Ghida. On behalf of the Board, staff, and participants of the Scholar Rescue Fund, I must say that we are all extremely grateful for their invaluable assistance. We are also so pleased that HRH Princess Ghida is a member of SRF's Board.

I also acknowledge and thank other members of SRF's Board who have come on this trip with us: Leo Melamed, one of the world's great business thinkers and the long-standing leader of the world-famous Chicago Mercantile Exchange; Julian Johnson, an American leader in enabling inner-city students to develop business careers.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank several guests:

- Mauro De Lorenzo, who is here as a representative of the famous John Templeton Foundation, with whom we are in discussion regarding additional education initiatives in the Middle East, and
- my son Tom Jarecki who has been a close associate in many of my business efforts

- (Mark Wilson and Basma Amawi from the U.S. Embassy Amman; who has been a close associate in many of my business efforts)

I thank also CUMERC and especially Dr. Safwan Masri for hosting these days of training and offering their facilities for more of our meetings. We are very pleased to see Dr. Masri here with us today.

We thank very much for their support and wonderful assistance HRH Prince Hassan and HRH Princess Sumaya.. Many of the host institutions represented today are under their purview:

- Royal Scientific Society;
- Princess Sumaya University of Technology;
- the Royal Human Security Centre; and
- the Jordan Museum.

We are grateful to them, to these hosts, and to the many other hosts for our scholars in Jordan and throughout the Middle East region.

And of course we acknowledge and thank the 55 scholars who have come for this conference. These scholars – our IIE Visiting Professors – are the reason we are all here today – they and the great knowledge, learning, and potential for positive progress that they represent.

We are at a great point in this organization's development .How did we get here? Where are we going? And – most important – how are our scholars guiding us there?

As I said at the beginning, the Scholar Rescue Fund itself began 8 years ago – and we have rescued over 300 scholars from more than 42 countries since then – but our Iraq story really began almost exactly three years ago.

That involvement did not begin with a single big explosion or a particularly jarring episode of persecution against scholars. It began with something simple and much less violent: a letter.

It was about this time three years ago that we received a very surprising letter. Although Iraqi scholars had been reaching out to us for help for some time – and we could clearly see that things were getting worse – this letter was not from a scholar but rather from a government minister: the Iraqi Minister of Higher Education, Dr. Abid Al-Ajeeli, who is here with us today.

The letter was simple. It said: our scholars are being killed. Please save them.

At the same time, the Scholar Rescue Fund – which up to that time was making 20-30 grants per year from among 100 or so applications – was flooded with applicants from Iraq. Wonderful and amazing scholars they were – extremely senior scholars, Deans of Universities, Chairs of Departments, and more. They were the intellectual capital of Iraq and they were bleeding.

This time, we had the Scholar Rescue Fund ready. At every Selection Committee meeting, their number, the need and even more the quality of our Iraqi applicants was swamping our selection. So many of our Iraqi scholar selections that our global program was endangered.

And so we traveled to Jordan, where we met Prince Talal and Princess Ghida and they offered their heart and their hand. We showed Dr. Al-Ajeeli's letter to several foundations and government donors. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation gave us immediate emergency support. The Lounsbery Foundation and the U.S. Department of State soon followed, as did a number of private sector donors and foundations.

OK, we said – let's get started. We met with Dr. Al-Ajeeli in London and he spurred us on. He and his Ministry do not take part in nominations or choosing -- and he has never asked us for fact or names, He respects the fact that it is our program. I do however want to acknowledge his seminal involvement and I want now to ask him to speak for a few words to help us close this session.

In order to give everyone the chance to hear move from him I hereby invite all of you to have breakfast with us and Dr. Al-Ajeeli tomorrow, Saturday, January 9, at the Inter-Continental Hotel at 7 am in the morning. He will give a brief talk then and has told me that he will answer any questions you put and he has told me he welcomes particularly the hard questions.

Dr. Al-Ajeeli, please honor us with a few words, after which I will close this session

WHEN I GET BACK:

Distinguished professors: It is a great honor for us to have you as a part of our program

You are a special group, and we are expecting great things from all of you.

So let me bring this all back to a few final thoughts.

I ask that you leave this event asking yourselves a few questions:

- How will I help my country, my region, and the world?
- How will I fulfill my special role as a scholar?
- How will I help advance knowledge and progress?

The road we have traveled together through this project has not been easy, but it can lead to progress, peace, and hope for a better future.

This better future must include higher education, and it must include all of you – not just as travelers but as real leaders advancing our progress and showing us the way.

Prince Talal and Princess Ghida; SRF Board members and guests; Dr. Masri: I thank you all very much.

Distinguished scholars: When I see all of you in a room together, I think not of the troubles you have gone through – although I know these have been very great. Instead,

I think of the positive progress you have made. It fills me with hope for a brighter future
– for you, for us, for Jordan, for Iraq, and for us all.

End