Measuring Respect: Towards a Global Academic Freedom Survey

How much is academic freedom understood and respected around the world? Are conditions worsening or improving? The short answer is: Nobody knows for sure because there is a lack of comprehensive, quality information. Current efforts--including life-saving campaigns for threatened scholars undertaken by the Human Rights Action Network of the AAAS Science and Human Rights Program, the Scholars at Risk Network, the IIE Scholar Rescue Fund and others--rely largely on reports of specific incidents. These reports are vital for helping in each case, but insufficient for broader action aimed at wide-reaching improvements in conditions.

Scholars at Risk, an organization based at New York University that promotes academic freedom and defends the fundamental rights of scholars worldwide, is working to address this lack of information by developing a global Academic Freedom Survey: a regular, reliable measure of relative conditions of respect for academic freedom around the world. Once established, the Survey will become an invaluable tool for advocates working to promote academic freedom. It will provide a basis for periodic reports on a region or issue of concern--or a watch-list or index of the 'best' or 'worst' performers, like those that have proven effective in other areas. Most important, the Academic Freedom Survey will provide a framework for feedback and wider dialogue about academic freedom issues that will contribute to international understanding and systems of protection.

Limits of incident-reporting

Current efforts to respond to attacks on academic freedom rely almost exclusively on irregular reporting of specific incidents: In country A, scholar X is arrested on false charges; his supporters notify local or international advocates who organize letter campaigns and protests. Or in country B, the faculty of University Z is forced to sign loyalty oaths by a newly installed authoritarian government; faculty refusing to sign are dismissed. Local and international advocates again respond with letter campaigns and protests. Such responses are extremely important and have been very effective in generating urgent attention from the media and policy makers on a case-by-case basis. With great effort and some luck, advocates have secured the release of imprisoned col-

Monitoring Human Rights: New AAAS Manuals

Sarah Olmstead, Project Coordinator
Science and Human Rights Program

There has been increasing awareness in recent years that the ability to undertake systematic monitoring of the major international human rights instruments is central to evaluating the performance of states and holding them accountable for violations of these rights. Monitoring state compliance with international human rights standards is an exciting process with numerous scientific and methodological prerequisites. To assist in this process, the Science and Human Rights Program is developing a series of rights-specific manuals. Four have recently been completed. The full text of each can be downloaded from the SHR website:

Health: http://shr.aaas.org/manuals/rth.shtml
Food: http://shr.aaas.org/manuals/ft.shtml

Work: http://shr.aaas.org/manuals/rtw.shtml
Environmental Health: http://shr.aaas.org/manuals/ehi.shtml

The manual on the right to health is also available in a printed version.

Also In This Issue...

- Science and Human Rights Workshop: Building a coalition to work on domestic human rights Association .................. 3
- Scientific Society Profile: Human Rights Section of the American Political Science .............. 5
The Right to Health: A resource Manual for NGOs by Judith Asher

"In a clear style and accessible format, the Manual shows health professionals, their associations and other interested non-governmental organizations, some of the practical ways in which they can promote and monitor the right to health in their communities and countries. It considers the obligations of states in relationship to individuals within their borders, as well as the human rights responsibilities of states beyond their borders. As befits a human rights manual, it has a particular preoccupation with the right to health of vulnerable, marginalized and otherwise disadvantaged groups and those living in poverty."

From the Foreword to the Manual
Paul Hunt, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right of Everyone to the Enjoyment of the Highest Attainable Standard of Physical and Mental Health

This resource manual, produced through a collaboration of the AAAS Science and Human Rights Program with HURIDOCs, and the Commonwealth Medical Trust (Commat), is intended to raise awareness of human rights perspectives on health, including the right to health. It provides strategies and tools that can be employed to promote and protect the right to health, monitor its implementation, and identify its violation. And it offers information and guidance on ways in which health professionals, their associations, and other non-governmental organizations can hold governments accountable for their obligations arising from the right to health.

The Right to Food: A resource manual for NGOs by Rolf Künne mann and Sandra Epal-Ratjen

"This most useful study comes at the right time; it concentrates on the human rights dimension of food security issues and does so with remarkable in-depth analysis... With great conceptual clarity, the linkage to human rights concepts and how to realize the human right to food is also addressed."

From the Foreword to the Manual, Elie Riedel, Vice-Chairperson UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

This resource manual for NGOs on the Right to Food was commissioned from FIAN International - FoodFirst Information and Action Network by the AAAS Science and Human Rights Program and HURIDOCs. The Manual provides an analysis of hunger and famine and takes the victims’ perspective on food issues through case studies and supporting legal standards, relating them to the right to food. The authors investigate in detail how to use international and domestic law to realize the human right to food and the challenges that actors face in the fulfillment of this right. The Manual also outlines the roles of the various actors involved in the process of mainstreaming human rights in food policies, strategies and laws, including the WTO Agreement on Agriculture and the genetic resources provisions of the TRIPS.

Monitoring Labor Rights: A resource manual for NGOs by Jonathan Rosenblum

"The Manual fills a much-needed void in the world of sweatshops and codes of conduct because the lack of real examples of legitimate programs necessarily means that there are few people who know how to go about the job of independent monitoring... Read this manual and get a sense of the art of the possible. This is a very important first step in ending the charade that merely issuing a code of conduct means anything at all. Companies must be pressured to take the next step and develop an implementation plan that meets the standards outlined in the Manual."

From the Foreword to the Manual, Terry Collinsworth, Director, International Labor Rights Fund

Although codes of conduct have been in place for the last few years, there has been very little truly independent monitoring of the labor practices of multinational corporations. Monitoring Labor Rights: A Resource Manual for NGOs, which is the result of a collaboration of the AAAS Science and Human Rights Program with HURIDOCs and the International Labor Rights Fund, lays out, plainly, how companies and NGOs may go about the process of independently monitoring labor rights and improving labor standards.

Continued on page 3
Science and Human Rights Workshop: Building a coalition to work on domestic human rights

Sarah Olmstead, Project Coordinator and Victoria Baxter, Program Associate
Science and Human Rights Program

The connections between science and human rights is often not immediately obvious to either scientists or the public; however there are many ways in which scientists currently utilize technology and research to benefit human rights. For example, NASA and the US Agency for International Development run a program called the Famine Early Warning System Network, which uses satellite imagery, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and meteorological and economic data to anticipate famines and more effectively distribute aid. A domestic example of science in the service of human rights is the research carried out by Physicians for Human Rights, among others, into identifying patterns of racial and ethnic disparities in U.S. health care, and the effort in the broader health care community to produce a report card on health quality for minority populations.

There are many scientists working on issues related to human rights, however the community is not currently organized in such a way that scientists can easily share their work with others; as a result, much energy is spent in duplicating work of others.

On 25-26 July 2005, the AAAS Science and Human Rights Program organized a two-day meeting for members of the scientific community and human rights organizations to discuss ways in which the scientific community can be pro-actively engaged in promoting human rights domestically. The goal of the meeting was to lay the groundwork for the development of a human rights coalition of scientists and scientific societies working on domestic human rights issues, and foster better communication between groups producing scientific data and those looking to use such data.

The meeting began with speakers discussing ways in which science has already been applied to specific human rights concerns, including GIS mapping to identify potential famines, social science research to identify patterns of racial disparities in health care, indicators to measure environmental health and the use of budget analysis to measure compliance with the right to education. Ajamu Baraka, Director of the United States Human Rights Network (USHRN), gave a broad overview of the history of human rights in the United States and outlined several pressing issues for domestic human rights, including post-9/11 curtailment of basic freedoms and civil liberties, treatment of detainees at Guantanamo, rights of immigrants, refugees, and undocumented workers, police brutality and injustices in US prisons, and basic issues with racial and economic disparities in health and housing.

AAAS also invited Hans Hogrefe, the Minority Director of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus to present an over-Continued on page 6

Manual on Environmental Health Indicators and benchmarks: Human Rights Perspectives by Karim Ahmed, Anya Ferring, and Lina Ibarra Ruiz

"Although numerous environmental indicators and benchmarks have been established in recent years by international agencies and national governments, not all such assessment tools or metrics are suitable for use in developing countries. This is because of limited resources and lack of trained personnel needed for collecting data and analyzing them in many developing regions of Asia, Africa and Latin America. For these reasons, in this manual a practical set of environmental health indicators and benchmarks is recommended that may be implemented at the local and regional levels with either existing resources or those that could be obtained with modest additional expenditure of funds and training of technical staff."

From Chapter 1 of the Manual, Karim Ahmed, Anya Ferring, and Lina Ibarra Ruiz

The Manual on Environmental Health Indicators and Benchmarks: Human Rights Perspectives, written by Karim Ahmed, Anya Ferring and Lina Ibarra Ruiz, is the most recent of the manuals developed by the Science and Human Rights Program. This resource, which was drafted in close cooperation with the Global Children's Health and Environment Fund and the National Council for Science and the Environment, is a pioneering effort to draw together the fields of environment and human health from a human rights point of view. It also offers a new approach to developing human rights related indicators and benchmarks. Based primarily on a human rights perspective, the Manual provides a compilation of environmental health indicators and benchmarks to determine the state of human health in urban and rural communities around the world. It provides a means through which community-based organizations, especially those located in developing countries, can begin to assess the extent of human health risks posed by a degraded environment in their community. The Manual can be downloaded from http://shr.aaas.org/manuals/ehi.shtml, where it can also be ordered in print.

REPORT ON SCIENCE & HUMAN RIGHTS 3
leagues like scholar X; they have mobilized and found new academic homes for dismissed faculty like those from University Z. But as a foundation for broader advocacy, incident-reporting suffers from a number of significant shortcomings: It is by definition limited to after-the-fact responses. This means it is locked in the dynamics of crisis and confrontation, making proactive and cooperative strategies difficult, if not impossible. Incident-reporting also poses serious questions of bias and verification of allegations and facts; while not insurmountable these questions can impede rapid action and dilute the ability of campaigners to influence policymakers.

Incident-reporting is also dependent on the presence of witnesses and their ability to marshal outside attention and resources. This distorts understandings, particularly by masking the majority of incidents which go unreported because of lack of monitors or resources. Take again for example scholar X, who is arrested on false charges in country A. If supporters are present to organize a campaign on X’s behalf, then country A may be labeled as “bad” on academic freedom issues (even if it is a relatively open society and scholar X’s arrest was an isolated incident). Meanwhile country C might not be implicated in any reported incidents of attacks on academic freedom (and therefore conditions there may be considered better than they in fact are), merely because no one in country C reported problems and organized campaigns.

Most important, incident-reporting alone is ill-suited to establishing trends, positive or negative, or measuring relative intensities. It cannot yield meaningful comparisons over time or across cultures, and therefore is not an adequate basis of information to support the kinds of concrete, prescriptive recommendations that are more likely to yield significant, widespread improvements in conditions. By developing a methodology that compares conditions within and across countries over a period of years, Scholars at Risk hopes to highlight situations where improvements already have been made; to identify situations where conditions are worsening; and to foster cooperative dialogue about strategies for future improvements.

Developing a new methodology

Scholars at Risk, together with research partner RTI International (www.rti.org) is working to develop a methodology that goes beyond incident-reporting, using both quantitative and qualitative data in order to measure respect for academic freedom across cultures and time. We envision a methodology that combines three elements: objective “snapshots” of the background conditions, questionnaires for key stakeholders, and independent research on each country.

Scholars at Risk

First, we will develop “snapshots” of the political, economic, social and cultural conditions under which academic communities operate in each country. The snapshots will be used to identify “peer groups” of countries whose academic communities are facing comparable background conditions, for example distinguishing countries with only a few higher education institutions from those with hundreds, or those experiencing only non-violent threats from those facing severe, violent attacks. This will increase the utility of the Survey by allowing for recommendations targeted to each peer group, and by revealing significant intra-group variations that would otherwise be disguised by the much wider, more severe variations across the total survey population.

We also plan to develop questionnaires for stakeholders to share both objective data and subjective perceptions of conditions in their higher education communities. Likely questionnaire subjects include education ministries, higher education associations, and university administrators, faculty and students. Mindful of the costs and challenges of distribution, return, follow-up and processing of responses, we expect to employ email distribution and response whenever possible, most likely in concert with selective distribution of paper-and-pencil questionnaires and a widely available internet-based response vehicle (like a response page on the Scholars at Risk or a partner’s website).

The final element is independent research on each country. Scholars at Risk will invite from among Network-member faculty and students volunteer “country analysts” who will be responsible for preparing detailed narratives on conditions in one or more countries. Their analysis may be based on existing expertise; library research; recent books, articles, essays and country reports; national and regional higher education publications; and other surveys and indices. The analysts will also be expected to incorporate incident-reports, including reports in the media about attacks on scholars and universities. Whenever possible, analysts would be encouraged to communicate directly with alleged witnesses and victims.

Building positive dialogue

A review committee will combine information from the snapshots, questionnaires and country research into a final report. While the format of the report will depend on the level and scope of the data produced, it will include an overall analysis of global findings, short summaries of each country covered and a number of tables of ranked or weighted findings. It may also include recommendations for stakeholders.

For purposes of communicating to a wider public, the media and policy-makers, the report may include a watch-list, index or other scale of the “best” or “worst” performers. Such scales have proven effective in drawing attention to problem situations and spurring constructive engagement by policy makers in other areas, including for example good governance, anti-corruption, press freedom and political freedom. Mindful however of the problems with such scales (particularly those assigning sequential rankings), we will work to ensure that any scale is both well justified by the data and does not impede the Academic Freedom Survey’s overall goal of increasing constructive dialogue.

Toward that same goal, Scholars at Risk will build into the Survey report a vehicle for feedback from stakeholders,
Scientific Society Profile: Human Rights Section of the American Political Science Association

The American Political Science Association (APSA) is a professional organization of political scientists founded in 1903 that serves over 15,000 members in over 80 countries. APSA works to expand awareness and understanding of politics and to provide academic and professional exchange and networking among its membership. APSA has 34 organized sections, which are groups of members who share a common interest in a particular subfield of political science. The sections provide opportunities for networking of APSA members on specific issues or themes and to promote the development of the discipline through topical panels presented at the APSA Annual Meeting.

The Human Rights Section was formed in 2000 following a nearly two-year petition drive among APSA members. According to Association rules, when 200 APSA members sign a petition to signal their interest in joining an organized section, a section can apply for recognition from the APSA Council. A major part of the impetus for the petition drive was that scholars who worked on human rights had little institutional means to network with other APSA members on human rights issues and research or to present human rights-focused panels at the APSA Annual Meeting. Organized sections within APSA are allotted panels at the Annual Meeting based on membership and past panel attendance; given the high rejection rate for proposed panels, creating a human rights section proved crucial in increasing the number of human rights-related panels at the meeting.

The Human Rights Section differs from scientific freedom and human rights committees in other scientific societies, such as the AAAS Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility or the American Physical Society’s Committee on the International Freedom of Scientists, in that the Section does not play an advisory role to the Association and is not the institutional committee that develops APSA’s positions and statements concerning human rights. The APSA is constitutionally non-partisan; its Council decides whether to adopt resolutions or take other action in support of academic freedom or freedom of expression with the Association, the profession, or the university. The Human Rights Section serves primarily to promote scholarly exchange, debate, and development among political scientists on the study of human rights in national and international politics.

For the past two years, SHR has been profiling the human rights work of AAAS affiliated societies in the Program’s newsletter. For this edition, SHR spoke with APSA Human Rights Section President Michael Goodhart about the work of the section. Dr. Goodhart is an Assistant Professor of Political Theory at the University of Pittsburgh.

According to Dr. Goodhart, some of the major human rights issues for political scientists include: measurement issues; conceptual questions, particularly relating to debates about whether human rights are universal or vary by culture; political transitions and transitional justice, including the mechanisms and policies successor regimes employ to redress past violence and injustice while working to consolidate rule of law and democracy; transnational and non-governmental organizations and their impact on human rights policies and practices; and, the diffusion of human rights norms nationally and internationally. These are just a few of the “big issues” in the field. These and other concerns often intersect with the work of other branches of political and social science.

The Section also provides resources on human rights to its members and other interested parties. The Section website provides a discussion forum for dialogue and for debate on research and substantive issues in human rights. The site also provides information about degree programs in human rights, upcoming related events, recent publications in human rights, and a newsletter that features Section activities and news.

More information about the APSA Human Rights Section can be found on their website: http://www.apsanet.org/humanrights

Next issue: The Network for Education and Academic Rights

Robert Quinn is the director of the Scholars at Risk Network, the executive director of the IIE Scholar Rescue Fund and a member of the AAAS Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility. Scholars at Risk is an international network of universities and colleges promoting academic freedom and defending the human rights of scholars worldwide. SAR member institutions offer sanctuary to scholars who suffer threats in their home country.

For more information: http://scholarsatrisk.nyu.edu. The Scholar Rescue Fund is a project of the Institute of International Education (IIE). The Fund awards matching-sun grants to universities hosting temporary visits by threatened scholars. For more information: www.iie.org/SRF.
view of how human rights issues are brought before Congress. Although the Human Rights Caucus limits its work to international - rather than domestic - issues and specific cases, Hans did provide some key insights as to how to approach both the Caucus and other Members of Congress on human rights issues. Interestingly, he pointed out that there is a view on the Hill that scientists come at issues without an agenda, which means they can be very influential in presenting research and/or specific data in order to educate, rather than being seen as pushing for a particular policy. Hans also suggested that a good way for scientists to communicate with Congress would be to go directly to the Congressional Research Service with findings they might be relevant to legislation or other governmental decisions.

For the remaining time of the conference, participants organized themselves into three topical area discussion groups: health and human rights; discrimination/environmental justice/economic, social and cultural rights; and academic freedom/the right to education. Participants identified ways to leverage existing resources within the scientific sector - broadly defined - to be mobilized and utilized for the protection and promotion of human rights within the United States.

The outcome of these breakout sessions were a series of specific recommendations for future resources, activities, and other products. Some of the resources planned are educational materials, both directed at scientists and the media and public, as well as web-based searchable databases of experts and scientific research that’s relevant to the work of human rights activists and decision-makers. The focus of the resources are to get existing research findings to social justice and human rights advocates and to find ways to bridge gaps in understanding, culture, and language between the science community and human rights actors. The resources identified in the discussions are aimed at linking scientists and advocates, identifying and facilitating networking possibilities and developing sustainable relationships.

Scientific societies and academic associations have a certain amount of clout and prestige that make them an invaluable resource to promoting the full realization of human rights—both civil and political and economic, social and cultural—in the United States and abroad. Additionally, there are many ways in which the various fields of science can be applied to human rights issues. Scientists and academics have strongly supported many of the core values of human rights, such as freedom of expression and association. Over the last 30 years, many individual members of the scientific community and their respective societies have emerged as strong advocates for human rights around the world and are interested in promoting a human rights agenda in their own country. Hopefully the initiatives discussed above will be able to expand the historical activities undertaken by scientific organizations and coalesce the scientific community into a more united and powerful force for the promotion of human rights.

More information on the workshop and the Science and Human Rights Coalition can be found at http://shr.aaas.org/scisocs/