

# Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom MONITOR project: Homepage (<http://monitoring.academicfreedom.info>)



# ACADEMIC FREEDOM MONITOR

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Attacks on higher education worldwide threaten the safety and well-being of scholars, administrators, staff and students; undermine the quality of academic work and instruction; and deny everyone the benefits of expert knowledge and scientific and creative progress.

Too often such attacks go unreported. SAR's Academic Freedom Monitor identifies and tracks key types of attacks with the aims of protecting vulnerable individuals, promoting accountability and preventing future violations.

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SAR's **Academic Freedom MONITOR** tracks attacks on higher education communities and promotes free inquiry and debate as central to academic quality and civic participation.

### REPORTED ATTACKS ON HIGHER EDUCATION

REGION: GLOBAL

	KILLINGS, VIOLENCE, DISAPPEARANCES	28
	IMPRISONMENT	23
	PROSECUTION	17
	LOSS OF POSITION	14
	TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS	4
	OTHER	29
<b>#</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>115</b>

CLICK ON A MAP TO SEE A SUMMARY OF ATTACKS IN EACH REGION



### LASTEST INCIDENTS

Date:	October 15, 2013	Date:	September 29, 2013
Type:	Loss of Position	Type:	Killings, Violence, Disappearances
Status:	Verified	Status:	Verified
Region/Sub-region:	<a href="#">Eastern Asia</a>	Region/Sub-region:	<a href="#">Western Africa</a>
Country or Territory:	<a href="#">China</a>	Country or Territory:	<a href="#">Nigeria</a>
Institution:	Peking University	Institution:	College of Agriculture

An economics professor at Peking University, Xia Yeliang, has reportedly been threatened with dismissal because of the content of his writings. University officials have not publicly stated specific grounds for the action, but a faculty vote is reportedly scheduled and is expected to implement the administration's decision.  
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On September 29, 2013 gunmen believed to be members of the Boko Haram militant group attacked the College of Agriculture in Yobe state, northeastern Nigeria, killing 50 students.  
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## ACADEMIC FREEDOM MONITOR



# Monitoring

SAR's Academic Freedom MONITOR focuses on developing greater understanding of the volume and nature of attacks on higher education communities in order to develop more effective protection responses.

Like a free press and independent judiciary, a healthy higher education sector is essential to an open, just and prosperous society; an engine of the skills and ideas a society needs to resist oppression and meet new challenges. When weakened by neglect or abuse, the sector is unable to fill this role, leading inevitably to conflict, instability and social distress.

The MONITOR aims to identify, assess and track incidents involving one or more of 6 defined types of conduct which may constitute violations of academic freedom and/or the human rights of members of higher education communities.

**Objectives:** The objectives of the MONITOR are: (1) to capture most incidents involving the 6 defined types of violations; (2) to deploy a reporting system to verify, centralize, process and distribute captured information in a fashion most likely to produce positive results; and (3) together with project researchers and their teams, to achieve levels of effectiveness and efficiency that will allow for expansion to fully global coverage at a reasonable expense.

**Methodology:** Scholars at Risk coordinates the MONITOR. A network of higher education professionals and advocates serve as monitors for specific countries or regions, often serving as lead researchers supervising teams of student researchers. Lead researchers identify and supervise their own student researchers as needed. Under the supervision of the lead researcher, student researchers use a research guide and materials provided by Scholars at Risk to identify incidents of attacks on higher education systems, institutions or personnel which fall into the 6 types of conduct to be monitored and record the details of each incident in the template provided, analyzing each incident as indicated and attaching corroborating primary and secondary source material when possible.

In most cases, initial identification and corroboration of incidents will come from secondary sources such as media stories and NGO reports. Where practical, researchers may attempt to collect primary source material also, including statements from victims, witnesses and/or perpetrators. These may be obtained as quotes in secondary reports (e.g. media stories), may be available as public statements on personal or organizational websites or blogs, or may be obtained through email/chat, VOIP, telephone or in-person interviews. Lead researchers determine whether a suggested interview can be conducted ethically and with sufficient protection for the safety and security of the interview subject as well as the student researcher, lead researcher or any other participants. Scholars at Risk receives, reviews and marshals reports from all researchers into a consolidated monitoring summary, and provides general oversight and support for all aspects of the MONITOR project.

The 6 types of conduct the MONITOR tracks are:

- **Killings/violence/disappearances** of members of higher education communities: Relevant incidents include killings and disappearances either in retaliation for particular academic content or conduct, or targeting of members of higher education communities, including higher education leaders, academic and nonacademic staff and higher education students. Disappearance includes arrest, detention, abduction or other deprivation of liberty by government or quasi-government officials, or by groups or individuals acting on behalf of, or with support, consent or acquiescence of the government, followed by a refusal to disclose the fate or whereabouts of the persons concerned or a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of their liberty, which places such persons outside the protection of the law. Violence includes violent physical assaults causing serious harm to individual members of higher education communities, including beatings, shootings or other injuries with weapons, and torture.
- **Wrongful imprisonment/detention** based either on academic content or conduct or on any other exercise of fundamental human rights: Relevant incidents include the arrest, interrogation, detention and/or prosecution of scholars, students or other members of higher education communities on false or otherwise wrongful grounds or charges, directly relating to, or in retaliation for, the expression of academic opinions or other professional or student activity, as well as in retaliation against other exercise of fundamental human rights, including free expression and freedom of association. The latter may include incidents of scholars, students or other members of higher education communities engaging in protected free expression, such as writing a letter to a newspaper or participating in a protest rally, even if such letter or rally is unrelated to the individual's higher education sector status. (These incidents may not qualify as violations of academic freedom directly, but may still constitute violations of the human rights of members of higher education communities which in turn may indirectly impair academic freedom.)
- **Wrongful prosecution:** Relevant incidents include administrative, civil or criminal proceedings against higher education leaders, academic and nonacademic staff or higher education students involving false or otherwise wrongful grounds or charges directly relating to, or in retaliation for, the expression of academic opinions or other professional or student activity, or in retaliation for other exercise of fundamental human rights including free expression and freedom of association. (Note that charges may be grounded in local law but nevertheless violate recognized international human rights standards because they punish protected activity.) Relevant incidents may also include, among others, proceedings for so-called "reputational harms" (e.g. 'insulting the

State' or 'offending national leaders') which may subject individuals to substantial monetary penalties or imprisonment, restrictions on travel during pendency of any action or after conviction, bankruptcy, loss of political rights (including right to hold or run for elective office) and loss of position at state enterprises, including universities. Also included should be documented incidents where State or other entities use the threat of a defamation or similar legal action to intimidate and silence academic personnel or students, even if such an action is never formally commenced (e.g. a State minister makes a public speech threatening prosecution of a scholar or expulsion of students for publishing an article). Such proceedings may be brought on behalf of individuals and institutions including governments and other state entities (such as the military), officials, private citizens, state religions, and nations themselves. When reporting on incidents of this type, researchers are encouraged to identify and if possible attach copies of the legal provisions providing the basis for any charges or threatened charges and evidence, such as any photographs of incidents or copies of any allegedly offending statements or publications.

- **Restrictions on travel or movement** based on academic content or conduct: Relevant incidents include improper travel restrictions on higher education leaders, academic and nonacademic staff and higher education students. These include, but are not limited to, legal, administrative or physical restrictions on travel within a state; restrictions on travel between states; arbitrary restrictions on a scholar or student's ability to obtain a visa or other entry or exit documents; denial of future permissions for travel; and retaliation for attempting to travel or after return from travel. Travel restrictions may be imposed by government authorities of the scholar or student's home state, government authorities of the state to be visited, and/or higher education institutions, leadership or professional associations.
- **Retaliatory discharge/loss of position/expulsion from study** based on academic content or conduct: Relevant incidents involving higher education leaders or academic staff include discharge, demotion, loss of promotion or other professional penalty for a scholar's academic work, including statements made in the classroom, writings, research, professional association/union activity, engagement with (and criticism of) higher education leadership or education policy, etc. Relevant incidents involving students include dismissal or expulsion from studies based on academic work or student activities, including statements made in the classroom, writings, research, student association/union activity, engagement with (and criticism of) higher education leadership or education policy, etc. The offending penalties may be imposed by state authorities, higher education institutions, or other higher education-related authorities.
- **Other significant events:** Researchers are encouraged to report incidents which do not fit squarely within one or more of the 5 defined types of conduct yet which are of such importance, scale, scope and/or duration that they have already, or have the potential to, impair significantly higher education functions, academic freedom or the exercise of human rights by members of higher education communities. Such incidents may include occupation or closing of higher education campuses; destruction of higher education facilities, materials, or infrastructures; systematic or prolonged harassment or threats against members of higher education communities; systematic limits on access to higher education; and/or systematic discrimination based on gender, race or other grounds in access to, employment within, or other elements relating to higher

education.

**Corroboration:** Researchers are instructed to provide at least two independent sources to corroborate each incident reported on the MONITOR website. These may include secondary sources such as local, national, and international media outlets. They may also include primary sources such as interviews with victims, witnesses or bystanders, and court/government documents. Researchers should strive to select sources that provide a reliable description of the incident (i.e. the reported events can be verified independently), or are well-recognized for high-quality, accurate reporting. Researchers are instructed to exclude sources that appear overtly biased. However, reports by non-governmental and advocacy organizations that have been deemed sufficiently objective and reliable may be used to corroborate incidents. Where multiple, reliable sources provide materially different accounts of relevant events, reports should acknowledge such discrepancies.

**Evaluation and verification:** Researchers and SAR staff review, evaluate, and strive to independently corroborate the key events, actors, and violations, described in each reported incident. Incidents that have been independently corroborated through sufficiently reliable primary or secondary sources are marked as “verified.” Incidents marked as “unverified” are those where only limited corroborating information is provided by the researcher or is otherwise available to SAR, but which are nevertheless potentially significant and merit reporting. SAR staff reviews and may include for reporting incidents that have garnered predominantly local attention, but which due to their impact on higher education communities, warrant broader international awareness.

Incident reports, links, and references are provided to assist users in evaluating alleged reports and do not necessarily represent the views of SAR, participating monitors or respective members and partners of the Scholars at Risk Network.

SAR will not knowingly report or disseminate information that is false or uncorroborated.

**SAR welcomes submissions of additional corroborating, clarifying or contradictory information which may be used to further research or otherwise improve data reported.**

To share information about an incident or to report a new incident, please click **here**

(<http://monitoring.academicfreedom.info/report>).

# Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom MONITOR project: Example highlighting institutional & social responsibility dimensions

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Learn about affected areas and get recent updates on attacks with the SAR Academic Freedom Monitor map. [click here](#) ▶

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Date: June 21, 2013  
Type: Other  
Status: Verified  
New/Ongoing: Ongoing Incident  
Region/Sub-region: [Americas](#)  
Country or Territory: [United States of America](#)  
Institution: Florida Atlantic University

On June 21, 2013 Florida Atlantic University (FAU) announced it would re-new the annual contract of Dr. Deandre Poole, an adjunct professor at the university.

As previously reported by SAR, after an academic exercise in which Dr. Poole asked students in his intercultural communications class to write "Jesus" on a piece of paper and step on it, he received death threats and was placed on paid administrative leave.

Following the incident the FAU Faculty Senate appointed a committee to investigate the controversial lesson and examine the university's response. The committee's report, released on June 20, concluded that the exercise was conducted appropriately and "found no evidence that the exercise was intended to discriminate against any religious groups." The committee further found that the university administration had breached academic freedom by banning the lesson without consulting Poole or other faculty, and expressed concern about "chilling effects on academic freedom" at FAU.

University administrators announced that Dr. Poole will only teach online classes during the summer and fall, due to concerns for his safety on campus. Heather Coltman, interim dean of FAU's College of Arts and Letters, stated to media that the school will decide in December whether to give Dr. Poole classroom assignments for the spring semester.

Scholars at Risk welcomes the results of the internal review process at the institution which examined the complaints against a faculty member with due consideration for university values, including academic freedom, autonomy and social responsibility. While welcoming the reinstatement of a scholar based on this internal process, Scholars at Risk remains concerned about any ongoing physical threats against an individual scholar or campus facilities which allegedly motivate the institution's restricting the scholar to virtual instruction, rather than on-campus, in-class teaching. While higher education leaders are responsible for maintaining the security within their institutions and communities, they must do so in a manner consistent with core values, including academic freedom. By restricting Dr. Poole to virtual teaching, rather than taking steps to ensure the security of the classroom space from outside intimidation, the university appears to have sacrificed academic freedom, presumably for political and/or budgetary reasons. Scholars at Risk urges university authorities not only to reinstate the scholar but to take all necessary steps to protect his safety on campus and ensure his timely return to in-class teaching.

**UPDATE: This is an update to an earlier report. To view, please [click here](#).**

## Sources:

<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/06/24/florida-atlantic-rehires-adjunct-center-controversy-over-class-exercise>

<http://www.palmbeachpost.com/news/news/local-education/fau-re-hires-instructor-in-jesus-controversy-facul/nYRhj/>

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/24/deandre-poole-fau-stomp-on-jesus\\_n\\_3490263.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/24/deandre-poole-fau-stomp-on-jesus_n_3490263.html)

# Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom MONITOR project: Example highlighting state, institution and student actors/conduct

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**Date:** December 3, 2012  
**Type:** Killings, Violence, Disappearances / Imprisonment / Other  
**Status:** Verified  
**New/Ongoing:** New Incident  
**Region/Sub-region:** [Northern Africa](#)  
**Country or Territory:** [Sudan](#)  
**Institution:** Al Jazeera University

On December 2, 2012 students at Al Jazeera University met with administrators to appeal the denial of tuition waivers for Darfuri students. The students claimed that under the Darfur Peace Agreement, Darfuri students are exempt from the payment of tuition fees however inconsistent interpretation of the provision has led to the denial of waivers at some universities. Police arrived on campus following the meeting and arrested 11 students who had attended.

The next day, December 3, students organized a peaceful sit-in on campus to protest the arrests and the university's policy regarding the waivers. According to reports, security officials and pro-government students dispersed the gathering with tear gas and metal rods, driving some students off campus. More than 50 students were arrested, most of whom were released days later on bail. Six students were reported missing. Of these four were found dead in an irrigation canal near campus on December 6 and 7, their bodies bearing signs of possible abuse. (At the time of reporting, the other two students remained missing.)

University administrators claimed the students had drowned in the shallow waters of the canal, while government authorities refused to release the medical examiner's report. A lawyer for one of the deceased students' families was arrested after requesting the report. On December 10, Sudan's Justice Ministry announced the formation of a commission of inquiry into the deaths. Several NGOs have expressed concern over the transparency and independence of the commission.

Scholars at Risk is concerned about alleged improper and excessive force against students engaged in expressive activity, and especially about allegations of physical abuse and killing of students by unknown individuals. Students and other members of higher education communities have the right to engage peacefully in expressive activity, including protesting education policies. State and university authorities have a responsibility to protect students engaged in such peaceful activity, and to ensure the perpetrators of violent attacks are held accountable. When state and university authorities are required to intervene in student protests to maintain order or security, they have a responsibility to do so in a way that respects institutional autonomy, academic freedom and human rights.

## Sources:

- [www.hrw.org/print/news/2012/12/10/sudan-justice-needed-student-deaths](http://www.hrw.org/print/news/2012/12/10/sudan-justice-needed-student-deaths)
- [www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article44811](http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article44811)
- <http://allafrica.com/stories/201212130199.html>
- <https://www.amnesty.org/en/news/sudan-must-end-violent-repression-studen...>
- <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article44774>