

News of Other Organizations

As a build-up to the upcoming CODESRIA meeting on Academic Freedom, we are pleased to include the following item initiated by World University Service (WUS). We hope our readers will continue to send us information related to Academic Freedom.

The Lima Declaration

On Academic Freedom and Autonomy of Institutions of Higher Education

Preface

During the past two decades there has risen an alarming tendency to undermine, restrict or suppress academic freedom and autonomy of institutions of higher education. This has a direct relation to a contracting system of higher education justified most often in terms of economic austerity and/or political expediency. The most alarming effect of this has been the increasing violations of human rights of teachers, students, researchers and educational writers irrespective of socio-political systems throughout the world. The original idea of a Declaration emerged out of a WUS workshop held in Nantes in 1984 which launched a new WUS programme - 'Academic Solidarity and Cooperation' - under the responsibility of a special commission. The Commission, after organizing an international workshop in Madrid in September 1986, requested Manfred Nowak, now Director of the Netherlands Institute of Human Rights, to propose a draft Declaration. The idea of a Declaration sprang out of the realization that although there were extensive international instruments and guidance in the field of human rights in general, there was a lack of it in the field of higher education which covered academic freedom and autonomy.

The first draft of the Declaration was written by January 1987, and the Commission took on an arduous process to discuss, test and revise it in consultation with the international network of WUS national committees both at a national and regional level. The draft was also sent to over fifty specialist organizations for comments and their suggestions proved very useful for the final formulation of the Declaration. The draft was revised three times before it was approved by the WUS International General Assembly in September 1988.

There have been commendable attempts by university communities both at the national and international levels to respond to the various challenges emerging from the erosion of academic freedom. However, many attempts have faced problems without having a clear concept about academic freedom, its various dimensions and implications. This Declaration, WUS hopes, could pave the way for more understanding, more discussion and more action towards defending academic freedom and autonomy of institutions of higher education.

Academic freedom is a human right of special importance to the higher education sector. It is not the privilege of a small elite. The concept derives from the right to education and relates to the right to freedom of thought and freedom of opinion and expression. Autonomy is the institutional form of academic freedom and is a necessary precondition for higher education institutions to fulfil their proper functions. They must be protected from undue pressures from the state and business interests.

WUS has resisted the temptation to proclaim the Declaration as International. The 'Lima Declaration' allows the international community to move in the direction of proclaiming an International Declaration on Academic Freedom and Autonomy of Institutions of Higher Education through a process of discussion and consultation at a higher level and taking the present Declaration as a starting point.

Preamble

The Sixty Eighth General Assembly of World University Service, meeting in Lima from 6 to 10 September 1988, the year of the 40th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Bearing in mind the extensive set of international standards in the field of human rights which the United Nations and other universal and regional organizations have established, in particular the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education,

Convinced that universities and academic communities have an obligation to pursue the fulfillment of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights of the people,

Emphasizing the importance of the right to education for the enjoyment of all other human rights and the development of human persons and peoples,

Considering that the right to education can only be fully enjoyed in an atmosphere of academic freedom and autonomy of institutions of higher education,

Recognizing the essential vulnerability of the academic community to political and economic pressures,

Affirming the following principles pertaining to education:

(a) Every human being has the right to education.

(b) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and peace. Education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in the construction of a free and egalitarian society, and promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups. Education shall promote mutual understanding, respect and equality between men and women. Education shall be a means to understand and contribute to the achievement of the major goals of contemporary society such as social equality, peace, equal development of all nations and the protection of the environment.

(c) Every State should guarantee the right to education without discrimination of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, economic condition, birth or other status. Every State should make available an adequate proportion of its national income to ensure in practice the full realization of the right to education;

(d) Education shall be an instrument of positive social change. As such, it should be relevant to the social, economic, political and cultural situation of any given country, contribute to the transformation of the status quo towards the full attainment of all rights and freedoms, and be subject to permanent evaluation.

Proclaims this Declaration.

Definitions

1. For the purposes of this Declaration

(a) 'Academic freedom' means the freedom of members of the academic community, individually or collectively, in the pursuit, development and transmission of knowledge, through research, study, discussion, documentation, production, creation, teaching, lecturing and writing.

(b) 'Academic community' covers all those persons teaching, studying, researching and working at an institution of higher education.

(c) 'Autonomy' means the independence of institutions of higher education from the State and all other forces of society, to make decisions regarding its international government, finance, administration, and to establish its policies of education, research,

extension work and other related activities.

(d) 'Institutions of higher education' comprise universities, other centres of post-secondary education and centres of research and culture associated with them.

2. The above mentioned definitions do not imply that the exercise of academic freedom and autonomy is not subject to limitations as established in the present Declaration.

Academic Freedom

3. Academic freedom is an essential precondition for those education, research, administrative and service functions with which universities and other institutions of higher education are entrusted. All members of the academic community have the right to fulfill their functions without discrimination of any kind and without fear of interference or repression from the State or any other source.

4. States are under an obligation to respect and to ensure to all members of the academic community, those civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights recognized in the United Nations Covenants on Human Rights. Every member of the academic community shall enjoy, in particular, freedom of thought, conscience, religion, expression, assembly and association as well as the right to liberty and security of person and liberty of movement.

5. Access to the academic community shall be equal for all members of society without any hindrance. On the basis of ability, every person has the right, without discrimination of any kind, to become part of the academic community, as a student, teacher, researcher, worker or administrator. Temporary measures aimed at accelerating *de facto* equality for disadvantaged members of the academic community shall not be considered as discriminatory, provided that these measures are discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved. All States and institutions of higher education shall guarantee a system of stable and secure employment for teachers and researchers. No member of the academic community shall be dismissed without a fair hearing before a democratically elected body of the academic community.

6. All members of the academic community with research functions have the right to carry out research work without any interference, subject to the universal principles and methods of scientific enquiry. They also have the right to communicate the conclusions of their research freely to others and to publish them without censorship.

7. All members of the academic community with teaching functions have the right to teach without any interference, subject to the accepted principles, standards and methods of teaching.

8. All members of the academic community shall enjoy the freedom to maintain

contact with their counterparts in any part of the world as well as the freedom to pursue the development of their educational capacities.

9. All students of higher education shall enjoy freedom of study, including the right to choose the field of study from available courses and the right to receive official recognition of the knowledge and experience acquired. Institutions of higher education should aim to satisfy the professional needs and aspirations of the students. States should provide adequate resources for students in need to pursue their studies.

10. All institutions of higher education shall guarantee the participation of students in their governing bodies, individually or collectively, to express opinions on any national and international question.

11. States should take all appropriate measures to plan, organize and implement a higher education system without fees for all secondary education graduates and other people who might prove their ability to study effectively at that level.

12. All members of the academic community have the right to freedom of association with others, including the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of their interests. The unions of all sectors of the academic communities should participate in the formulation of their respective professional standards.

13. The exercise of the rights provided above carries with it special duties and responsibilities and may be subject to certain restrictions necessary for the protection of the rights of others. Teaching and research shall be conducted in full accordance with professional standards and shall respond to contemporary problems facing society.

Autonomy of Institutions of Higher Education

14. All institutions of higher education shall pursue the fulfillment of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights of the people and shall strive to prevent the misuse of science and technology to the detriment of those rights.

15. All institutions of higher education shall address themselves to the contemporary problems facing society. To this end, the curricula of these institutions, as well as their activities shall respond to the needs of society at large. Institutions of higher education should be critical of conditions of political repression and violations of human rights within their own society.

16. All institutions of higher education shall provide solidarity to other such institutions and individual members of their academic communities when they are subject to persecution. Such solidarity may be moral or material, and should include refuge and employment or education for victims of persecution.

17. All institutions of higher education should strive to prevent scientific and tech-

nological dependence and to promote equal partnership of all academic communities of the world in the pursuit and use of knowledge. They should encourage international academic cooperation which transcends regional, political and other barriers.

18. The proper enjoyment of academic freedom and the compliance with the responsibilities mentioned in the foregoing articles demand a high degree of autonomy of institutions of higher education not to interfere with the autonomy of institutions of higher education as well as to prevent interference by other forces of society.

19. The autonomy of institutions of higher education shall be exercised by democratic means of self-government, which includes the active participation of all members of the respective academic communities. All members of the academic community shall have the right and opportunity, without discrimination of any kind, to take part in the conduct of academic and administrative affairs. All governing bodies of institutions of higher education shall be freely elected and shall comprise members of the different sectors of the academic community. The autonomy should encompass decisions regarding administration and determination of policies of education, research, extension work, allocation of resources and other related activities.

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Using this Declaration as a starting point, WUS offers the following suggestions for action.

What you can do to defend Academic Freedom

1. Publicize the 'Lima Declaration' through the media.
2. Use it as a reference document.
3. Get it endorsed by your organization.
4. Seek government recognition of the 'Lima Declaration'.
5. Organize public seminars and campaigns promoting academic freedom and autonomy of institutions of higher education.
6. Report violations of human rights in the education sector to WUS.
7. Defend the principles of:
 - Academic freedom as a civil liberty
 - Combining autonomy with social accountability

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