IIE-Scholar Rescue Fund Awards 27 Fellowships to Syrian Scholars in 2012 and 2013; Seeks Additional Applications from Syrians in Need and Potential University Partners

The crisis in Syria has created an emergency in the country’s higher education sector. In response, the Institute of International Education (IIE)’s Scholar Rescue Fund (SRF) has worked with the global academic community to mobilize support for Syrian scholars that will enable them to continue their academic work in safety outside Syria until they can return home. Between January 2012 and May 2013, the Scholar Rescue Fund provided 27 academic fellowships to Syrian scholars, which it defines as including professors, researchers, and public intellectuals. Seventeen academic institutions in five countries are currently hosting IIE-SRF grantees from Syria, and a number of others have committed to doing so. At the time of the Bulletin’s publication, seven Syrian scholars in fields ranging from sociology to chemical process engineering were still seeking hosts for their IIE-SRF fellowships.

IIE-SRF fellowships of up to $25,000 (plus individual health insurance and professional development assistance) support visiting academic positions anywhere in the world. Fellowships are disbursed through a host partner institution, which sponsors the scholar’s visa and matches the IIE-SRF award by providing salary, direct support and other in-kind assistance that would make the scholar’s appointment similar to any visiting position. Since IIE-SRF’s founding in 2002, the program has provided academic fellowships to over 500 scholars from 50 countries, placing them at nearly colleges, universities and research centers in 40 countries. Over the course of the past decade, much of IIE-SRF’s work focused on finding safe havens for Iraqi scholars, but in the past two years, it has increasingly focused on assisting Syrian scholars at risk.

The IIE-SRF fellowship applications are open to scholars from any field or discipline. Qualifying applicants are defined as those currently facing or recently fled from immediate threats to their lives or academic work. (Students or professionals seeking funding to pursue academic studies or training are not eligible.) Preference is given to scholars with a Ph.D. or other terminal degree in their field who have extensive teaching or research experience at a university, college or other institution of higher learning. Further, IIE-SRF strongly encourages applications from female scholars and under-represented groups. The organization maintains up-to-date information on eligibility and criteria at www.scholarrescuefund.org/pages/for-scholars/instructions-and-application.php.

The IIE-SRF Selection Committee awards fellowships quarterly, although applications are accepted at any time and can be considered on an emergency basis. Bulletin readers interested in learning more are encouraged to visit www.scholarrescuefund.org/pages/for-scholars/instructions-and-application.php for application instructions. (Information on the program in Arabic can be downloaded at www.scholarrescuefund.org/pages/for-scholars.php.) IIE-SRF welcomes referrals from third-party nominators, as well as queries from universities willing to host a threatened scholar.

James King is Program Officer at the Institute of International Education’s Scholar Rescue Fund. For more information on partnering with IIE-SRF to host a scholar, please visit www.scholarrescuefund.org/pages/for-hosts.php or contact James at: jking@iie.org.