



PAX ACADEMICA

Bulletin on Academic Freedom in Africa

Within the framework of its Academic Freedom Programme, the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) is pleased to announce the launching of a new publication called Pax Academica - a CODESRIA bulletin devoted to Academic Freedom in Africa.

CODESRIA's Academic Freedom Program was launched way back in the early nineties. Its objectives include, among others, the promotion of the freedom of research and thought as well as the protection of human rights within academia.

The launching of a *Pax Academica*, which will serve as a forum for debates on academic freedom, and as a monitoring, communication and an advocacy tool, **adds a new dimension to the Programme.**

Context and Justification

The violation of academic freedom is one of the manifestations of the multidimensional crisis that has been hitting African universities since the '80s. The persistence of this situation, no doubt, impacts negatively on the development and deepening of social science research and, by extension, on the production of new knowledge in Africa.

The Academic Freedom Program was launched in 1994, at a time when most African countries were undergoing processes of democratization. For most of them, the transition to democracy took place in a kind of general precariousness of livelihoods and widespread human insecurity as a result of all sorts of threats, thereby making it difficult for many people to fully enjoy their rights and newly found freedoms.

Over the years, the political systems of many African countries became more liberal and open. However, this development was not uniform. In some countries, the political atmosphere has given rise to an expansion of democratic space, in which human rights and academic freedom are protected by constitutional provisions, whereas in others, there are still a number of restrictions on basic freedoms. In yet other cases, there are signs of serious reversals, as scholars are intimidated, and sometimes dismissed or prosecuted for having simply exercised their rights and duties as scholars, in countries that have the protection of academic freedom in their constitutions. Hence, the conditions of knowledge production in general and the rights of academics and researchers in particular continue to be major concerns.

The effort towards improving the state of human rights in the continent, however, is real. Structural problems still exist, but the fact remains that certain political and social realities have evolved in favor of academic freedom. The revolutions in North Africa are clear illustrations of this. In many countries of Africa, society is now more allergic than in the past to arbitrary acts and statements, and the freedom of expression and the pluralism of opinion are now much more widely accepted. In addition, the demographic and sociological weight of the university population (teachers, students and non-academic staff) is much more important than it was a few decades ago.

In the course of the 17 or so years of its existence, CODESRIA's Academic Freedom Programme has organized many activities, including conferences and national and regional consultations on academic freedom, emergency assistance to scholars in distress, as well as the publication of statements, articles and books.

Pax Academica

For many years, the absence of an African bulletin on issues related to Academic Freedom made it very difficult to monitor and evaluate the necessary activities aimed at promoting research freedom. The creation of *Pax Academica* could therefore contribute to filling this gap. An academic freedom bulletin called *Pax Academica* did exist in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), for many years, as a national bulletin of RECODELAC, a Congolese network for the promotion of academic freedom in the DRC. *Pax Academica, Bulletin on Academic Freedom in Africa* is a revamped and pan-Africanized version of the earlier bulletin published by RECODELAC. The new bulletin has as one its main objectives the creation of a support system i.e. an efficient instrument for the dissemination of not only information about violations, but also the fundamental principles and rules that can serve as parameters for the promotion, sensitization and the safeguarding of academic freedom in Africa, thanks to the building of a pan African and a global network for the promotion and protection of academic freedom.

***Pax Academica* will work with an extensive network of liaison officers who will be required** to gather precise information on the state of academic freedom in their respective countries. They will also be called upon to write or assist the Council to identify researchers who can contribute through articles, essays, analysis and reflections on the situation of academic freedom in their respective countries or elsewhere on the continent and around the world.

Colleagues interested to become liaison officers or to get more information on this initiative can send their emails to the following address: pax.academica@codesria.sn

Objective

The main objective of this publication is to provide the community of African scholars and researchers with an effective instrument for disseminating the basic principles, rules and referential basis useful for the promotion and defense of academic freedom in Africa.

It is intended primarily to convey, throughout the continent, the message of academic freedom and emancipation, thus contributing to sensitize the community of higher education and research to its social obligations and responsibilities based on existing international legal instruments (Charter of Human rights, African Charter on Human Rights and Peoples,

Kampala Declaration on Intellectual Freedoms in Africa). Secondly, it intends to help spread on a large scale the culture of peace, democracy, human rights and academic freedom among African researchers and academics. The *Pax Academica* bulletin will also contribute to the exchange of ideas and information on university life in general and issues relating to academic freedom in particular. In this way, CODESRIA intends to revive the networks of African academics and researchers dealing with already existing specific themes or creating new ones. It goes without saying that the realization of such efforts and endeavors requires the collaboration of the whole academic and research communities in Africa.

Frequency

Pax Academica bulletin will be published initially in French and English twice a year. The Guest Editor of each issue will have the freedom to choose the language in which the 'original' version of the issue will be published; CODESRIA will take charge of the translation of the text into the other language. The *Pax Academica* bulletin will be published initially in an electronic format which will allow an unlimited number of pages and content may be accompanied by several illustrations (photos, cartoons, etc.).

Sections

The bulletin will feature the following:

1. **Editorial:** This defines the guidelines and outlines the major theme of the volume.
2. **News:** Here, concrete examples or case studies are presented, with descriptions of the instances of violation of rights and academic freedom within universities and research institutions. The status of the various actors in this conflictual academic scene – student associations, unions and university officials – will be highlighted and analyzed. It will also expand the geographic coverage to the study of academic freedom violations outside Africa.
3. **Briefs:** The main themes revolving around the defense and promotion of academic freedom will be addressed in this category: ethics, good governance, democracy, the rule of law, the university and its mission, the African researchers and their responsibilities in the society, and in terms of academic freedom. This section will feature presentations on major political and legal issues related to academic freedom. To address these issues, we will regularly request recognized experts to work on specific themes.
4. **Testimonies:** In this section, the history of struggles and major episodes related to the **defense and promotion** of academic freedom will be recalled.
5. **Views:** This section will explore and reflect on the modalities and strategies to be implemented by the community of African scholars and researchers to make a triumph of academic freedom. This will be the space for expressing original views on academic freedom and discussing the nature and relevance of the concept, why is that? From which instance social science comes from? What are its limits and what stakes does it express? : How to define and problematize academic freedom, so that a substantial discussion on its definition and its fundamental issues can take place.

6. **In Short:** This section will provide information about university life, including events held by organizations of teachers and students concerning the defense and promotion of academic freedom which, given their nature, do not appear in the News section.
7. **Read:** This section will present items for critical analysis and information on important publications dealing with academic freedom in Africa and, more generally, in the world.

Administration & Management

Editors

The editors will guide the general policy of the publication under the auspices of the Academic Freedom programme of CODESRIA. On the one hand, and taking into account the imperatives of the time in order to promote academic freedom in the whole Africa

Board

The editorial board is in charge of the scientific content and quality of the publication. It is composed of resource persons with international credibility, proven expertise in this area and the availability required. It is composed of members based in Africa, the Diaspora and the rest of the world.

The Secretariat

The secretariat of the bulletin is responsible for the daily management of the publication. It maintains contacts with publishers and authors. It includes as many members as there are sections. The specific function to each member of the secretariat will be defined by an appropriate terms of reference.

Correspondents

A group of people will be charged with the responsibility of gathering information on the current state of academic freedom in every country of the continent. There will be at least one correspondent in each country. Beyond the focal points and in order to fill any areas not covered by the national correspondents, there will also be a correspondent in each sub-region. The selection and recruitment correspondents will be on the basis of competence, availability and devotion.

Printing and distribution

The printing and distribution of the publication will be handled by the Publications and Dissemination Programme of CODESRIA, Dakar, Senegal.

For more information about Pax Academica, please contact:

Tel: 221-338256597

Fax: 221-338241289

Email: pax.academica@codesria.sn

Web : <http://www.codesria.org/>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/CODESRIA/181817969495>

You can also follow us on Twitter : <http://twitter.com/codesria>