




The Impact of Political Change on the State of Academia Including Academic Freedom in the Arab World: Libya as a Case Study

Mabruk Derbesh  ^{a,b,c}

^aColumbia University, New York, NY, USA; ^bColumbia University Global Center Amman, Amman, Jordan; ^cFaculty of Economics and Political Science, University of Tripoli, Tripoli, Libya

ABSTRACT

Furthering Western style academic freedom has been challenging, as Arab countries, especially Libya, have known only autocratic regimes throughout their modern existence. Amidst its current political and social upheaval, Libyan society is drifting towards the unknown. The problem addressed in this study is the impact of political change on the state of academia but, more specifically, academic freedom. Since the intervention in Libya by NATO states, many academics have lost their jobs. Some have become refugees outside of Libya as a direct result of the appropriation of most of the governmental posts in the country by religious and political radicals. The research questions reflect ways in which the new inserted de facto leaders of post-transitional Libya have impacted life on Libyan campuses and academic freedom.

ARTICLE HISTORY



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KEYWORDS

Academic freedom; freedom of expression; academic leadership; Libya; Arabic

Introduction

¹Academic freedom is the ability to research, publish, and discuss concepts and subjects without interference or control from political or religious influence (Areen 2009). It is also, the fundamental basis of all intellectual studies, accepted by a variety of associations and organisations (Kish 2010). Freedom to enquiry by faculty members and students is essential to the mission of the notion itself (Calhoun 2009). Another more relevant definition is that scholars should have the freedom to teach and explore ideas without being targeted for repression, job loss and imprisonment (Quinn and Levine 2014). The term was also defined by the 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and tenure, produced and authored by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and also by the Association of American Colleges and Universities as “teachers and students must always remain free to inquire”; a famous quote borrowed from Chief Justice Earl Warren (AAUP 2009). Another definition which comes from Academics For Academic Freedom (AFAF), states that academic freedom has two main principles:

CONTACT Mabruk Derbesh  mabruk@gmail.com  Faculty of Economics and Political Science, University of Tripoli, PO Box 13275, University Road, Sidy Almasry, Tripoli, Libya

¹The use of the term ‘Western’ here is to refer to academic freedom as institutionally defined in the form of a geographic university as supposed to the idea of academic freedom itself, which is an ancient concept and refers to any learning venue or setting. For instance, academic freedom was raised and widely respected when the mosque served as an edu-