

## **Statement on Mobility in NYU's Global Network / Faculty Committee on NYU's Global Network**

As everyone surely knows by now, two tenured faculty members from the NYU Faculty of Arts and Science in New York were invited to teach at NYUAD, but subsequently denied entry to Abu Dhabi: Arang Keshavarzian (Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies) and Mohamad Bazzi (Journalism). Both professors were denied security clearance and a work visa to teach at NYUAD.

After Professor Bazzi published an [op-ed about his experience in the New York Times](#), President Andrew Hamilton issued [a public statement](#), the Middle Eastern Studies Association (MESA) issued a [letter to President Hamilton](#) and to [UAE authorities](#), and NYU's Department of Journalism and the Gallatin School declared that they "call on NYU faculty based in New York to consider refraining from teaching or participating in academic events at NYU Abu Dhabi until such time as all NYU faculty and students are free to do so." [President Hamilton responded to the Journalism Department's resolution](#), and the university issued an [FAQ on Global Mobility](#). In addition, both students and faculty have weighed in on this matter and the story has been covered by numerous media outlets.<sup>1</sup>

As a faculty body devoted entirely to academic matters related to NYU's global operations, the Faculty Committee on the Global Network endeavored to learn as much as possible about this case in order to make recommendations.

To that end, the Co-Chairs Eliot Borenstein (NYUNY) and Martin Klimke (NYUAD) invited Professor Bazzi and Professor Keshavarzian to share their stories and their concerns with the committee, and reached out to the leadership and faculty at NYUAD, as well as the offices of Provost Katherine Fleming and NYU President Andrew Hamilton, to gather respective information.

Before turning to the case itself, the Committee would like to affirm a set of principles that are relevant to the broader questions of mobility in the university's global network:

- 1) Governments throughout the world set their own policies about visas and security, with the United States itself often being a difficult country for foreign scholars and students to access. The point is not to deflect from the current case by invoking US visa denials, but to acknowledge that this is a problem with a much broader scope than any one country.
- 2) While the Committee recognizes a feeling among many faculty that the way NYU's previous administration established the global network lacked transparency and broad-based faculty engagement, NYUAD itself is a remarkable success story, educating students from more than 115 countries, including many who otherwise would not have

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<sup>1</sup> These include, among others: <https://www.nyunews.com/2017/11/06/show-solidarity-divest-nyuad/>; <https://www.nyunews.com/2017/11/08/an-alternative-view-on-nyuad/>; <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/10/opinion/nyu-abu-dhabi.html>; <http://oncenturyavenue.org/2017/11/response-to-recent-nyu-abu-dhabi-controversy/>; <https://www.thegazelle.org/issue/124/opinion/breaking-news-nyuad-cuts-ties-with-ny-campus-becomes-uad>; <https://as.nyu.edu/content/nyu-as/as/research-centers/neareaststudies/about/from-the-director.html>; <https://www.thenation.com/article/the-limits-of-the-global-network-university-an-open-letter/>

the means or opportunity to attend a university, and generating ten Rhodes scholars in a matter of five years. Moreover, the faculty across the global network, whether in the three portals or the eleven sites, are all colleagues and should be involved in conversations about them, since they are often active participants in discussions about academic freedom, mobility, and labor in their respective locations.

- 3) Most governments, including those of the US and the UAE, do not provide an official rationale for denying entry. In this case, this means that while the two professors denied security clearance are both of Shi'a background, there is no official confirmation that this (or any other potential factor) motivated the denial. NYUAD's faculty, staff, and students currently include people who are Shi'a. The fact remains that the NYUAD community consists of people of all religious backgrounds, including Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus, and Buddhists.
- 4) We need to consider the different definitions and interpretations people employ when referring to academic freedom and the distinctions that are made between academic freedom and global mobility. When people speak of academic freedom, they usually have one of three phenomena in mind:
  - a. pedagogical freedom (freedom of classroom discussions);
  - b. the absence of censorship and outside restraints on research (freedom to choose the object and mode of research);
  - c. freedom to discuss and disseminate research outside the classroom while commenting on matters of interest to society (including access to archives, field research, campus, potentially on a global level).

With regard to NYUAD, we have heard no evidence of obstacles to freedom in the classroom or in the area of research. However, restrictions do exist in the UAE on extramural speech as a result of local laws, as they do in other parts of the university's global network. As for global mobility, we are aware of no university in the world that can override a government's visa and security policies.

The committee believes that any restrictions to both academic freedom and global mobility in any of the three portals or the eleven sites of the university's global network are of great concern, have not been sufficiently discussed among all members of the NYU community in the development phase of the university's global network, and must be reviewed openly while at the same time recognizing the limits of the university's power and the benefits of global engagement.

- 5) The Committee rejects any efforts to sever ties among the portals, seeing such moves as not only counter-productive, but needlessly punitive to faculty and students at the respective portal. The university's global network is no longer simply an idea; it is an established fact of life at our university. We are all NYU.

Having said this, the Committee would like to ask the university leadership to publicly and unequivocally reaffirm its commitment to the global mobility and academic freedom of all of its members across the various portals and sites as one of the fundamental principles of its concept

of the university's global network and engagement, as well as international scholarly collaboration, learning, and advancement of knowledge. The Committee also asks that President Hamilton use the same public forum to confirm his rejection of any designation of the two faculty members as a "security risk" (as he did in his [letter to MEIS](#)).

Furthermore, there are a number of aspects about the current case that suggest the need for greater transparency and clarity about the opportunities and limits in the operation of the university's global network:

- 1) **Application Procedures:** The committee urges the university leadership to develop a clear set of procedural guidelines for the application process for visa and security clearances for each of the three portals. These guidelines should not only include an approximate timeline but also outline the various steps of the application process and specify what information is needed by whom for what purpose.
- 2) **Information:** Applicants need to be kept informed on a regular basis on the status of their application and consulted in case of requests for additional information, potential challenges that might arise, any appeals that are filed on their behalf, or "workarounds" that are (not) being employed. The committee also considers "workarounds" to existing visa regulations inappropriate in terms of institutional liability and individual risk of the applicants and urges the university to discontinue their employment.
- 3) **Point Person:** The committee recommends the establishment of a clearly designated and publicly advertised point person or set of contacts in each portal that faculty can approach in case they have any questions about mobility in NYU's global network in general and specific sites/portals in particular.
- 4) **Communication Procedures:** The committee recommends the establishment of clear communication procedures between the respective portals/sites involved in facilitating mobility, so that any adverse impact on individual / curricular / departmental planning can be avoided.
- 5) **General Mobility Information:** The committee also recommends to make accessible on a regular basis updated information on the immigration policies governing each portal/site on a dedicated website to foster greater understanding about challenges to mobility in the university's global network for all members of the NYU community.
- 6) **Global Mobility Report:** The committee recommends a review of the format of [NYU's global mobility report](#) in order to publish as much information about the state of the global network mobility for all portals and sites as possible without violating the privacy of faculty, staff and students, clearly indicating the number and any potential trends or pattern in visa rejections in specific cases.
- 7) **Visa/Security Clearance Denials:** In case of visa/security denials, the committee asks the university to develop clear and specific protocols that govern all portals/sites which not only offer options for potential appeals, but also a set of alternatives potentially

involving the use of other portals/sites in the university's global network, e-learning opportunities, etc. It also urges the university leadership to provide both support and compensation procedures to any faculty member from the portals/sites encountering challenges to their mobility through visa/security clearance denials.

The committee believes that the existing framework of the university's global network needs to be used more actively to address and counterbalance structural inequities in terms of access and mobility for the members of the NYU community and recommends the creation of a flexible system to address challenges to global mobility.

The committee is very cognizant of the sensitivities involved in international circulation of faculty, staff and students. Nonetheless, it urges greater transparency from the NYU administration about the challenges to global mobility and the university's efforts to meet them.

Most importantly, the committee believes that there must be transparent protocols for visa/clearance applications to all the sites and portals in the university's global network, and that these protocols must be public knowledge. The committee is happy to serve as a platform for faculty to reach out to and discuss such protocols as well as foster an ongoing debate about the state of NYU's global network on a regular basis (e.g. via an annual faculty town hall).

The committee hopes that by fostering a realistic discussion and greater awareness of both the limits and opportunities of the university's global network, NYU will be in a better position to navigate the complexities of global connectivity and reap its benefits.

### **The Faculty Committee on the Global Network**

Co-Chairs: **Eliot Borenstein**, FAS and **Martin Klimke**, NYU Abu Dhabi

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**Alexander Geppert**, NYU Shanghai

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**Dale Hudson**, NYU Abu Dhabi

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**Rachel Law**, Student Senators Council

**Heather Lee**, Assistant Professor, NYU Shanghai

**Peter Loomer**, College of Dentistry

**Teboho Moja**, Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development

**Yaw Nyarko**, Provostial At-Large Appointment (FAS (Economics))

**Daniel Perkins**, Division of Libraries

**Jan Plass**, Committee on Technology-Enhanced Education (Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development)

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**Gail Segal**, Tisch School of the Arts

**Malcolm Semple**, Global Sites (NYU Sydney; FAS (Neural Science))

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**Tazuko Shibusawa**, Silver School of Social Work

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