

# cara



ANNUAL REPORT | 2021–22

## FOREWORD

The challenges of the Covid pandemic were enormous for us, but we successfully continued our activities and indeed gained a better understanding of how virtual teaching and remote organisational management could enhance our efficiency and effectiveness. Furthermore, during this period without any in-person exchanges, we became more explicitly aware of how partnership-working informs everything that we do. Given our mission and charitable status, we have always had to work in partnerships, but we now realise that partnership-working is not only a key transactional dimension of our operations; it is a crucial part of our DNA.

Pre-2020, our partners included 120 UK universities and several learned societies and national Academies; nearly 1,000 individual staff in UK universities volunteering their help in many different ways on our Programmes; many charities and foundations in the UK and overseas, as well as many individual benefactors, small and large; and other 'academic rescue' international NGOs. Each of these partners brings something essential to us; together, they inscribe multiple perspectives in our thinking as a mode of self-definition as well as a *modus operandi*.

There is a wonderful African saying: *'It takes a whole village to raise a child'*. At Cara, we would paraphrase this as *'It takes many communities to rescue and nurture an at-risk academic'*. We are constantly finding new partners as circumstances change and bring new challenges, whilst also maintaining current partners who continue to help us improve our operations. The restrictions of the pandemic necessitated creativity and innovation. Our staff responded magnificently, not only ensuring our activities continued in the strange world of Covid, but also creating innovative additions to our offer, e.g. the week-long online 'Syrian Voices' Symposium and the expansion in the volume and content of our mentoring initiatives for Fellows. In both of these cases, we worked both with established partners and with new partners from areas as different as digital media and cultural psychiatry.

For us, partnership-working is also essential and potentially transformative on the individual academic level, hence our urging of all our Fellows to become active members of international networks of scientists and scholars, to disseminate their findings to non-specialist audiences, and to engage in public engagement, building partnerships beyond the academic world. And in the Syria Programme we explicitly encourage the Fellows to work in genuinely interdisciplinary ways in order to optimise the creative potential of disciplinary difference.

In September 2021, the Taliban seized power again in Afghanistan and imposed a strict Islamic Law, and then in February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine. These conflicts have brought extraordinary new levels of urgency and complexity to our work, but with the help of existing and future partners, we are confident that we'll be able to bring ever more at-risk academics to sanctuary.



**Professor Michael Worton**  
CBE, Cara Chair

## A VICE-CHANCELLOR'S VIEW

**“Now, every material asset a person possesses may flee; education alone is an asset of which an individual cannot be robbed”.**

With these prophetic words, Dr Astley Clarke made the first donation to establish the forerunner of the University of Leicester over 100 years ago.

Uttered in the wake of the First World War and a devastating flu pandemic, the words are as meaningful today as they were then. Education empowers people.

As an immigrant from a nation then torn by civil war, I should know. Education changed my life and opened up untold opportunities. It empowered me.

That is why I am so grateful for the work of Cara and so proud of our association with you for several years. It has enabled our University to reach out and support at risk scholars and academics from countries such as Syria and Afghanistan.

Now, through Cara, we are extending that reach to support Ukrainian scholars and amongst our Cara fellows we currently have a two-year academic fellow in our School of Law.

The University is enriched by its inclusive and globalised approach to education. We are a University of Sanctuary in a city with a proud history of welcoming people from around the world. This week, the University is organising various events to remember Uganda 50, the arrival of many Ugandan Asians to Leicester.

As we begin our second century, our support of Cara allows us to continue our legacy of providing a safe haven for people seeking safety. Our approach harnesses the spirit of those who helped establish the University and of those activists who were pioneers in the fight for equality. Including former Principal of the University Fred Attenborough, father of David and Richard, who offered sanctuary to two German-Jewish refugee children, in their family home on campus, during the Second World War. Refugees here also included several students and the eminent Dr Felix Rosenthal from Germany. Rhoda Bennett, an alumna then Librarian, helped to resettle many Jewish German refugees in the USA and UK. During the Spanish Civil War, Mary Attenborough, wife of Fred Attenborough, helped establish a refuge for 50 Basque children.

There are countless other examples that demonstrate how the University of Leicester has helped, and continues to help, those who are persecuted or in danger accessing education as a means to develop themselves. Each underlines the true purpose of education - to free an individual from the shackles of the mind.

**Professor Nishan Canagarajah**  
President & Vice-Chancellor  
University of Leicester

## A YEAR OF CRISES

I signed off last year's Report just a few days after Kabul fell to the Taliban. As I noted then, the Taliban's return had sparked profound fears among Afghan academics, particularly women. Even at that early stage, over 30 Afghan academics had already contacted us for support.

Within a few months, those 30 had become over 700. The Taliban kept public universities in Afghanistan closed for month after month. With no pay, very uncertain career prospects, and the wider economy collapsing, many Afghan academics were desperate. Public universities eventually re-opened in February 2022, but the hostile attitude of the Taliban's Higher Education Minister towards academics, whom he accused of importing blasphemy into Afghanistan, seemed only to justify earlier fears that many academics' past engagement with Western universities and colleagues would be held against them, and that they would in future have to conform to very different rules or suffer dire consequences. Many female academics, seeing the reimposition of past restrictions on women's freedom to move around and to participate in public life, were already in despair; and although some female students did return in February to their now-segregated universities, the Taliban's subsequent decision to bar girls from attending secondary schools must, for many, have confirmed their fears that women will no longer be allowed a full education and that their careers are therefore over forever.

Then, in February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine. In the following months Russian forces indiscriminately attacked targets across the country. Millions of people were displaced, and thousands of buildings destroyed or badly damaged. Among the displaced were many university academics; among the buildings, many universities and research institutes. While most men in Ukraine between the ages of 18 and 60 were required by Ukraine's martial law rules to stay to help resist, and many women chose to do the same, others – particularly women with young children – were looking for help to escape to a place where they could be safe, until they could go home again. Many of the academics among them turned to us.

Fortunately, our Fellowship Programme – today's version of the original rescue mission from 1933 – received generous support in response to both crises from our UK university partners, many of whom came forward with additional offers of funding and places for Fellowship awards. Some universities also provided funds to help us to take on urgently-needed extra staff, by increasing their annual subscriptions or by making additional one-off donations. Two additional staff members joined the Fellowship Programme team in January, with two more being recruited over this summer and joining in September 2022.

Despite this growth, the team still faces a dauntingly heavy workload – not least because, alongside all the applications we are getting from the places that have been in the headlines, there is no let-up in the appeals for help that are still coming in from all the 'usual' places, across the Middle East and elsewhere. But we can now see the results; we are making real progress and getting significantly greater numbers of people to places where they can continue their academic

work, and their families will be safe. In parallel, we are very pleased now also to have other ways to help, by working with the British Academy and others on the UK's new 'Researchers at Risk' programme for Ukraine, with UK Government funding, and by joining EU and other partners in leading one of the Work Packages of the EU's 'Inspireurope+' programme, which will strengthen and coordinate support across Europe for researchers at risk. We say more about both of these later in this Report.

Meanwhile our Syria Programme, which has been working since 2016 with Syrian academics in exile in countries neighbouring their own, principally in Turkey, has also been hard at work and achieving excellent results. The pandemic had forced us to abandon live workshops in Istanbul, and instead to bolster our already substantial online offering; but, like many others, we adapted and saw some benefits too, in terms of costs savings and wider reach. The numbers of Syrians engaged with the Programme exceeded 200, supported by some 370 university discipline experts and over 100 English for Academic Purposes tutors, all contributing in a voluntary capacity.

The highlight of the second half of 2021 was the five-day online Symposium, supported by the Royal Society and British Academy, which gave Syria Programme participants a chance to share their research with a wider audience and to demonstrate the value of their local knowledge and expertise. As we moved into 2022, we were able to resume face-to-face activities once again, starting with a four-day Academic Writing Workshop in Istanbul in March 2022, followed by plans for the first post-pandemic Research Incubation visits (RIVs) to UK universities and for a summer course and two round tables to be run in Turkey. This year our Programme team have also started to consider how the Programme might support those universities which have emerged since 2015 in the non-regime North-West of Syria, and this is likely to be an important new focus of the Programme's work.

Closer to home, and after almost two years of working online because of Covid, we went 'back to the office' at the beginning of 2022, on a hybrid basis. For most of the Fellowship Programme team, who had been working full-time in our office before Covid struck, it was a chance to re-connect, face-to-face; but our four Syria Programme staff had all been hired during the pandemic, and so it was a first chance for them to meet each other for real, and for the two teams to get together and begin to learn about different aspects of Cara's work 'in the round'. We look forward to building on this further in 2022/23.

**Stephen Wordsworth**

Executive Director

Firefighters work to extinguish a fire at the damaged building of the Kharkiv National University, 2 March 2022.  
REUTERS/Oleksandr Lapshyn



## FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

As described above, this has been a truly exceptional year for the Fellowship Programme – probably the most intense and challenging since the 1930s. Coping with two major crises within six months forced us to find new ways to address the complex challenges of each, while maintaining our high standards and robust processes.

The basic model is unchanged. We help academics to escape from immediate danger, with their families, and to reach a place at a university or research institute where they can continue their work in safety until, as we and they hope, they can one day return home. What was different in 2021/22 was the sheer number of those seeking support, and the rapidity with which the crises broke. Few people in early 2021 foresaw a complete Taliban take-over by the summer; nor, six months later, did many foresee an attempted Russian conquest and occupation of Ukraine.

Afghanistan was particularly challenging for the Programme team. With the support of an MP who was working on behalf of a constituent, and a lot of hard work, we managed to get a group of Afghan academics and their families onto the Home Office's evacuation list, but in the chaos at Kabul airport none of them actually made it onto a UK flight. In the days that followed, the team had to engage with ever-growing numbers of people plunged into despair and frantically hoping that we could somehow still find them a way out, yet at the same time quite understandably frightened that they would be seen as 'traitors' by their new overlords and risk a beating or worse if they drew attention to themselves by moving about more than was absolutely necessary for daily life. We were in regular touch with relevant UK Government Departments, who were keen to work with us, and we did everything we could to help the Afghans who were contacting us; but, with no UK Visa Application Centre (VAC) left in Kabul, there was a limit to how much preparation we could sensibly do until they and their families felt ready to risk crossing the border into Iran or Pakistan, to get to a VAC there. And for those who did not have passports for themselves or for some of their family, the first step needed to be a visit to a local passport office, when they reopened, to apply to a Taliban official for documents. Against that background it's no surprise that although hundreds applied for our help, only some 20 had actually made it to the UK by the end of July 2022, with their families, with a similar number on the way. Fortunately, and without in any way underestimating the dangers involved in making the trip, we have not had any real horror stories so far; and we have to hope that, as experience grows, more will feel able to tell us that they are ready to set out.

The crisis in Ukraine raised quite different challenges. Despite the shocking images of universities battered and blazing under missile attacks, the number of applications from Ukrainian academics was initially quite low, because of the restrictions on men of military age leaving the country and also because of the many other options that Ukrainian academics had in mainland Europe. This began to change, as our Government made it easier for Ukrainians to get here by introducing its 'Homes for Ukraine' and 'Ukraine Family' schemes. These made



For six months after the Taliban seized power, public universities remained closed. In October 2021, Hawa, 20, a third-year student, reads a book with her sister on a windowsill at their home in Kabul. REUTERS/Zohra Bensemra

it possible for those who had first contacted us from Ukraine, and who we had initially believed were going to need to go through the regular visa application process, to change their plans, find themselves a sponsor and just set off. People we had thought were still in Ukraine or perhaps Poland suddenly arrived in London, hoping we could arrange placements for them on the spot. Some took up contacts with universities themselves and were taken in or were put forward as candidates for the 'Researchers at Risk' scheme. Other initiatives, including the university twinning scheme launched by Universities UK International and Cormack Consultancy Group, created additional avenues and opportunities, and we needed to keep abreast of all of them. We pride ourselves on being a nimble organisation, but for a few months we were certainly tested.

Alongside all this, we were very keen to ensure that applicants from other parts of the world, such as Myanmar, Yemen and, as events in Ukraine unfolded, dozens from Russia too, should get the help they needed and deserved. By summer 2022 the Programme was dealing with some 1,200 applications and enquiries and working with some 385 Fellows with around 575 dependents in the UK and abroad. This included trying to place or finalising placements for 70 new Fellows, and planning onward moves for some 55 existing Fellows who were nearing the end of their initial placements and needed support to move on or to return to their home countries. At the same time, we continued to develop other initiatives; our mentoring scheme, for example, has expanded significantly over the past year and now has around 70 active pairs, with a further expansion planned as new Fellows arrive, and we also arranged webinars for our

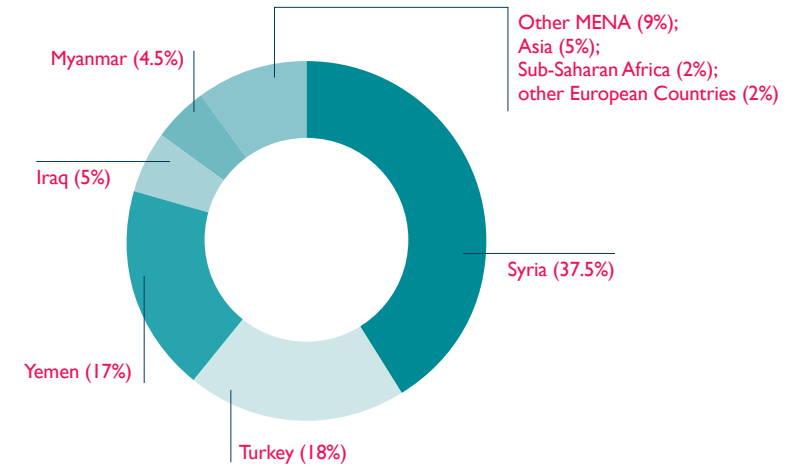
Skovoroda University,  
Kharkiv.  
Credit: Ukrainian  
universities

designated 'contact point' colleagues at our partner universities, which received very positive feedback. Throughout, however, we also maintained our close focus on the critical details of each individual Fellow's application, working with the Fellows and their host universities, who are the visa sponsors, to ensure that each application was completed correctly, so maintaining our 100% visa success rate; and also supporting those Fellows whose planned research brought them into the scope of the Government's Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS), thereby helping to ensure a continuing 100% success rate there too.

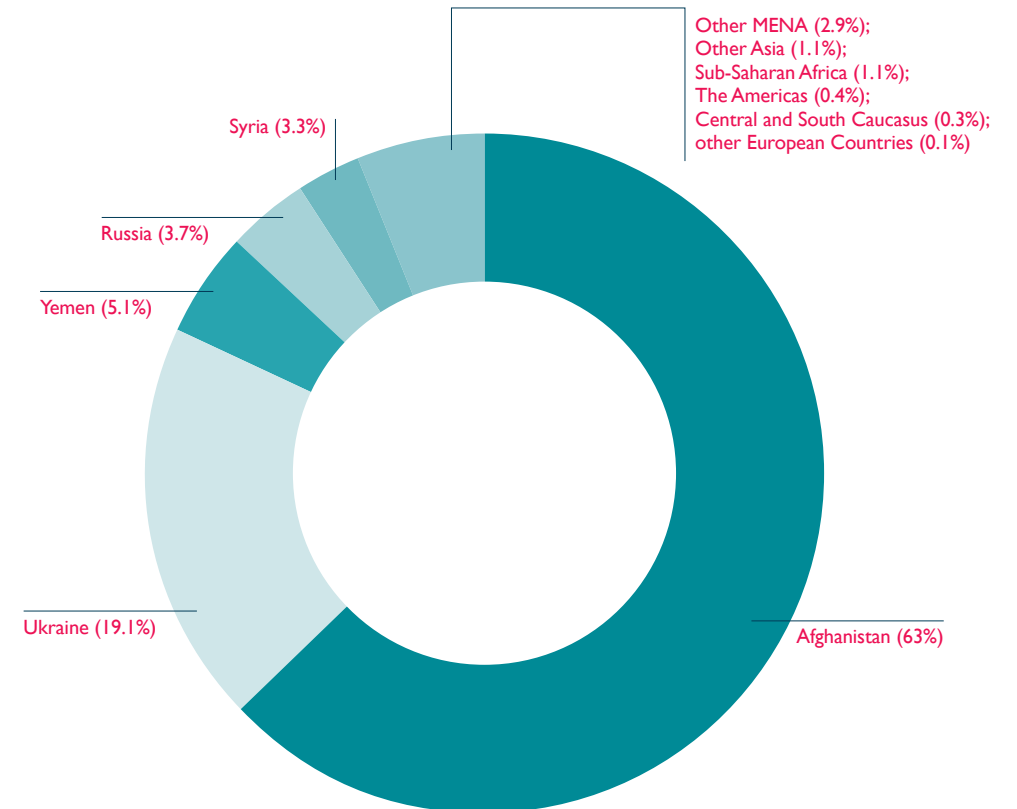


Throughout the last twelve months the support of our UK Network has been extraordinary. As the crisis in Afghanistan unfolded, many universities contacted us with offers of additional fully-funded places for Afghans. We were, of course, delighted to accept, but we had to manage expectations and point out that not many of the Afghans were actually in a position to move just yet and so we asked if we could use some of the extra places to help those from elsewhere who also urgently needed support. Invariably, they agreed; and the Russian invasion of Ukraine led to a similar wave of additional offers. We calculate that the total value of partner university contributions to fee waivers, accommodation

2020/21  
Applications: 160



2021/22  
Applications: 1,105



## CARA FELLOWS – RECENT HIGHLIGHTS

and living costs, visas and other travel costs in 2021/22 was over £7 million, a tremendous level of support. Over the course of the year many of our university partners have also been moving, with our encouragement, towards establishing ring-fenced annual ‘pots’ to support Cara Fellows, open to all nationalities; this is a great help and will save a lot of time that used to be spent in making and agreeing a series of ad hoc bids.

We very much hope and believe that this cooperation and support will continue in 2022/23. New problems are already emerging, however, in particular the soaring cost of air travel, which means that flights on some of the routes that our Fellows use from the Middle East now cost three times as much as they did a year ago - £1,200 per ticket rather than £400. As everybody knows, rents and everyday living costs here are also rising sharply, which is forcing us to increase the level of our Fellowship awards. Even if there are no new crises, it looks like being another exceptionally busy and demanding year.

Final update: as we go to press, the latest totals for those arriving from Afghanistan, Ukraine and other countries since August last year are:

**Afghanistan:** 30 Fellows, with 72 dependants

**Ukraine:** 19 Fellows, with 16 dependants

**Other countries** (arrivals and onward moves within the Programme):  
73 Fellows with 74 dependants

Another 80 Cara Fellows, with around 90 dependants, continued to work in their existing placements throughout the year.

### **Zeid Al-Bayaty**

Deputy Director/Fellowship Programme Manager

*“I like to express my sincerest thanks to Cara for sponsoring my work ... your aid motivated me to keep working hard to see this dream as a researcher come true.”*

### **Cara Fellow from Yemen**

**Many of our Cara Fellows are high achievers. Among many successes this year:**

- An Iraqi postdoctoral Fellow at Newcastle University secured a permanent position as Research Chemist at a synthetic chemistry research organisation, on a ‘Skilled Worker’ visa;
- A Syrian PhD Fellow started a postdoctoral position at the University of Oxford, joining Professor Dame Sarah Gilbert’s research team;
- A Ukrainian postdoctoral Fellow at Durham University was selected as a Keynote Speaker at CyberFest, a series of events across the North-East;
- An Iraqi PhD Fellow at the University of Greenwich secured a position at Canterbury Christ Church University, as a Lecturer in Computing and Cybersecurity;
- An Afghan Fellow at the University of Exeter presented at the ‘South-West Electron Microscopy 2022’ meeting held at the University of Plymouth;
- A Syrian PhD Fellow at the University of Chester was appointed as a Visiting Lecturer at the Chester Medical School;
- A Cara ‘alumna’ took up a position at AstraZeneca, conducting cancer research. Her spouse, a Cara Fellow from Syria, moved into a position at Imperial upon completion of his Cara placement;
- A Syrian PhD Fellow at Birkbeck took up a part-time teaching position at Brunel University;
- A Yemeni postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Cambridge took up a position in Cambridge as a Research Associate at The Healthcare Improvement Studies Institute (THIS);
- Two Fellows from Myanmar were selected to join the Summer School Programme at the Central European University in Budapest, organised by the Open Society University Network (OSUN);
- Since August 2021, 9 Fellows have secured prestigious UK ‘Global Talent’ Visas.

### Investing in Syria's Intellectual Capital: Creating Pathways to the Future

Our regional initiatives allow us to provide innovative and effective support to academics who are working on in their country despite the risks, or who have been forced into exile nearby. Following on from our Iraq Programme (2006-2012) and Zimbabwe Programme (2009-2013), our Syria Programme (SP) was launched in 2016. Its aim is 'To nurture and sustain Syrian academics and facilitate future opportunities by strengthening and connecting them and enabling their continued academic engagement, as a group that is vital to the future of Syria and its higher education.'

The Covid pandemic of 2020-21 forced us to end all face-to-face activities from Spring 2020, including the many workshops that had previously been held in Istanbul, but we were already offering a wide range of online activities and were able to continue all the SP's core activities in 2021-22:

- **English for Academic Purposes (EAP):** Weekly 1-to-1 EAP and 2-hourly group 'Speaking Practice' and 'English Language' sessions continued, with the valuable addition of *pro bono* access to both the University of Edinburgh's online in-session courses and 10-week in-person English pre-session courses at Leeds and the University of South Wales (USW), including accommodation;
- **Academic Skills Development (ASD):** The weekly ASD E-learning Soirée Series continued, addressing skills areas that need further development and introducing new research- or teaching-related concepts and methods;
- **Cara-Commissioned Research (CCR):** this focussed in 2021-22 on five Syrian-led studies exploring the challenges facing higher education institutions (HEIs) in the non-regime North-West of Syria. Over 25 SP colleagues were involved, and the outputs were published in the *International Journal of Educational Research Open (IJEDRO)*;
- **Syria Research Fellowship Scheme (SRFS):** Two further SRFS Grant Rounds were announced in September 2021 and April 2022, raising the number of SRFS-supported discrete pieces of research to over 90, on topics as diverse as 'Jabhat al-Nusra's Attitudes toward Tangible Heritage in Syria: The Disengagement from Al-Qaeda' and 'IAS: a new novel phase-based filter for detection of unexploded ordnance'.

By March 2022 we were able to return to Turkey to hold the first 'post-pandemic' workshop, a 4-day in-person academic writing event. We have now also been able to resume our programme of 6- to 8-week 'Research Incubation Visits' (RIVs) to UK universities, which had been paused during the pandemic. The first was hosted by the University of Bristol, with more pending at Anglia Ruskin, Cambridge, Leicester, Middlesex, the Open University, Sheffield Hallam, Stirling and USW, and others under discussion.

**SP 'spin-offs':** Over the last six years our university partners have increasingly been drawing on the experience and skills of the Syrian academics working in the SP to benefit their own research. For example:

- **The University of Edinburgh-led 'Syrian Food Futures' (SFF)** project completed in late 2021, having brought together several separate studies, including three Syrian-led ones that explored the impact of Syrian food-related cultural and traditional practices on food security – a wholly neglected dimension;
- **The University of Surrey-led 'Agricultural Voices Syria' (AVS)** is an innovative interdisciplinary approach to knowledge transfer from Syrian agricultural experts in exile to farmers in non-regime North-West Syria who no longer benefit from Syrian government extension services. The AVS began in the form of a podcast series and expanded in 2022 with the introduction of videos on key agricultural topics;
- Other recent SP-spin offs have included a collaboration between the Leicester University-based Psychology in Education (PIE) Research Group and Sham University, the first of six private universities to have been established in North-West Syria since 2015, looking at resilience amongst faculty and students in conflict-affected environments; a University of Edinburgh 4-week online academic writing workshop for Sham Applied linguistics MA students; and the contracting of an SP participant to develop an online Open University 'Arabic Language and Culture' course;
- The USW/Cara Fellow Scheme, launched in 2020-21, has grown further and has provided 35 SP participants with institutional affiliation and access to vital online resources, including journals and courses.

**Numbers and Profiles:** By the end of 2021-22 over 200 Syrian academics were involved in our Syria Programme. As a result of our decision to focus new registrations primarily on female academics and on those from the Arts and Humanities, the gender balance improved from 1 female to 7 males to 1 to 5. The average age is 41, ranging from 27 to 69. Disciplines continue to span the full spectrum from Anthropology and archaeology to physics, business studies, engineering and agriculture.





British Academy-funded Workshop, March 2022

**University Support:** Our SP relies heavily on the support of hundreds of volunteers. Over 100 EAP experts currently support EAP-related activities, with over 400 more academics supporting the SP in a variety of roles, including as research-team mentors, independent expert reviewers, ASD E-learn Soirée presenters, editors, workshop facilitators etc. Together they make up the *SP Peer Review College*.

**Dissemination & Impact:** The past twelve months have seen an increased focus on the dissemination of SP research outputs in order to reach practitioners and policymakers. Our 5-day online SP Symposium (6-10 December 2021), supported by the British Academy and the Royal Society, provided an important platform for over fifty Syrian colleagues to present on their SP-supported research to an audience of academic and humanitarian actors

and to highlight the importance of their local knowledge, experience, access and networks. A thematic approach was adopted for each of the five days, allied to relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs):

- Day 1: ‘Reconstructing Syrian Society and the Role of Higher Education’ (UNSDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities/UNSDG 16: Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions);
- Day 2: Inequality & Displacement (UNSDG 10: Reduced Inequalities);
- Day 3: Operationalising Research to Help Rebuild Syria’s Infrastructure (UNSDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy/UNSDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities);
- Day 4. Syrian Food Futures: Agriculture & Food Security (UNSDG 2: Zero Hunger / UNSDG 15: Life on Land); and
- Day 5. Syria: Partnership for the Goal of Quality Higher Education (UNSDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals/ UNSDG 4: Quality Education).

The SP ‘Briefing Paper’ Series, launched in May 2021, will continue to target key actors amongst practitioners and policymakers.

**Publications & Conferences:** A further 17 SP research papers were published in peer-reviewed journals, including *Remote Sensing, Agriculture (MDPI), International Journal of Cultural Property, International Journal of Educational Research Open*, and the *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology and Heritage Studies*. This brought the total number of SP-related publications to 43, with another 14 in review and 16 more awaiting submission. SP participants were also supported to make presentations at international conferences, including the *International Conference on Calcined Clays for Sustainable Concrete 2022* in Lausanne, and the *International Conference for Learner Corpus Research 2022* in Padua.

**Awards:** SP participant Adnan Almohamad was awarded the 2022 Lalive & Merryman Fellowship for the best article published in the *International Journal*

of *Cultural Property* for ‘The destruction and looting of cultural heritage sites by ISIS in Syria: The case of Manbij and its countryside’. The University of Sussex-led, SP-partnered ‘*Agricultural Voices Syria*’ gained two awards: the Emerald Publishing 2021 Prize for ‘*Interdisciplinary Research*’, as well as the University of Surrey ‘*Impact*’ Prize. Two SP participants were also awarded Columbia University Middle East Research Centre (CUMERC/Amman) Fellowships.

**An Evolving Programme: Pathways and Impact:** Research remains central to the SP, providing the most effective vehicle through which to improve understanding of international standards and good practice, facilitate vital professional connections and develop international academic profiles and visibility through publication and dissemination, while also generating important academic contributions. The SP has an equally important role to play in supporting SP participants who are working to maintain access to higher education in North-West Syria and to enhance its quality in this fragile conflict-affected area, in line with UNSDG 4 ‘Quality Education’ and UNSDG 17 ‘Partnerships for the Goals’.

#### Academics as Agents for Change: The future of higher education in North-West Syria

“I am one of many Syrian academics who have been working in the conflict area of North-West Syria. For five years I have tirelessly crossed the border from my exile in Turkey to help develop an educated generation capable of rebuilding the country once the war ends.”

Dr Abdulkader Rashwani

In addition to maintaining its core activities, this next phase will see the SP also build on five SP-supported studies on the challenges facing the emerging HE sector in North-West Syria, in collaboration with nineteen SP participants who are faculty members with senior management roles at Sham University.

An ‘overview research’ is also underway to help capture key elements of the SP and contribute to the development of Cara’s ‘Country Programme’ (CP) model. This will inform future Cara responses to crises in which a university sector and its staff and students are directly targeted or affected, and also lead to a ‘Handbook’ for universities wishing to support Cara’s future Country Programme work.

The Cara Syria Programme remains extremely grateful to its two core funders, the Open Society Foundations and the Mellon Foundation, to its other partners, and to the extraordinary number of individual university experts and their institutions who continue to support the Programme and without whom its delivery would not be possible. The third independent evaluation of the Programme has recently confirmed that this in-kind support effectively triples the value of the SP funders’ financial investment in the Programme.

**Kate Robertson**

Cara Middle East Adviser

## “She was not breathing”

### Afghan lecturer battles to save two-year-old daughter in Kabul Airport

He was lucky, because he was tall.

Crushed between the bodies, Eraj Haidari waved his mobile phone in the air. He had, on the instructions of the Dutch crew who were to fly him and his family to safety, set his smartphone screen to display a bright block of orange – the national colour of the Netherlands. The crew would see this signal in the crowd and barge into that grasping mire of humanity to haul him, his wife and their two-year-old daughter onto a plane and then away – away from a collapsing Afghanistan; away from the conquering zealots; away from his own certain execution at the hands of this new, ‘moderate’ Taliban. Haidari had been a university lecturer in Mazar-i-Sharif, in Northern Afghanistan. He had taught teenaged girls and boys together, as equals. He had collaborated with the occupying NATO forces. There would be no exceptions for people like him – had been no exceptions.

“Three months ago they killed one of my colleagues,” Haidari says. “He was like me: a US graduate working with the US embassy. So they killed him. They kidnapped him for one month - and then they slaughtered him.”

After three hours in the airport, orange phone screen waving above the crowd without result, Haidari fought his way back through the crowd to his wife and daughter. The story becomes disjointed and Haidari’s voice begins to crack. It’s unclear how he found his family in the slow churn of people – but when he did, his daughter was not breathing.

“I was lucky, because I am tall,” he says. He apologises. Around him at that moment, the news would later report, Afghans including children were being slowly pushed to the floor and crushed underfoot. At this point, Haidari admits he was being driven by panic. He grabbed his daughter, lifted her above the throng and pushed with his wife to the exit.

“Dutch security were calling me,” he says. “Sir, your life is in danger – you have to come back to this spot. We will collect you.” I said, ‘I can’t! This just happened to my daughter! Her situation is very bad!’”

His daughter had, mercifully, begun to breathe again - but the escape plan was over. He overpaid the taxi driver to take them to the apartment they had abandoned earlier that day and tossed his phone under the seat in front of him - along with all paperwork that identified him as an academic and a NATO collaborator.

A Taliban fighter stopped the car. Haidari could not understand him – the man was not an Afghan - but he was interrogating the driver. Haidari had paid the driver to tell anyone who stopped them that he and his family were returning from a trip - the drive home had simply taken them past the airport.

Haidari would have had no way of knowing whether the driver was selling him out until it was too late. If the man with the rifle searched the car and found his phone and documents, he would be dragged from his family and into the street, then executed as a traitor.

The foreign fighter waved the vehicle past.

Back in the apartment, Haidari was making calls. The Dutch promised they could still take them - but the situation at the airport had not improved. Finally, he called a driver he had used for the past five years in Mazar. Haidari had \$800 in cash left.

“Do you know any trustworthy guys [in Kabul]?” Haidari recounts the phone call. “I need four strong boys. If they help me, I will give them \$200 each for three hours work.”

24 hours after Haidari’s first attempt to leave the country, he arrived at the airport with four makeshift bodyguards: one protecting his daughter; another his wife. Two were with Haidari, one protecting him, the other holding his document bag. They delivered his family to their plane and out of the country on the 25th of August.

A day later, two suicide bombers and a gunman killed 183 people at the airport. 170 were Afghans, attempting the same escape as Haidari.

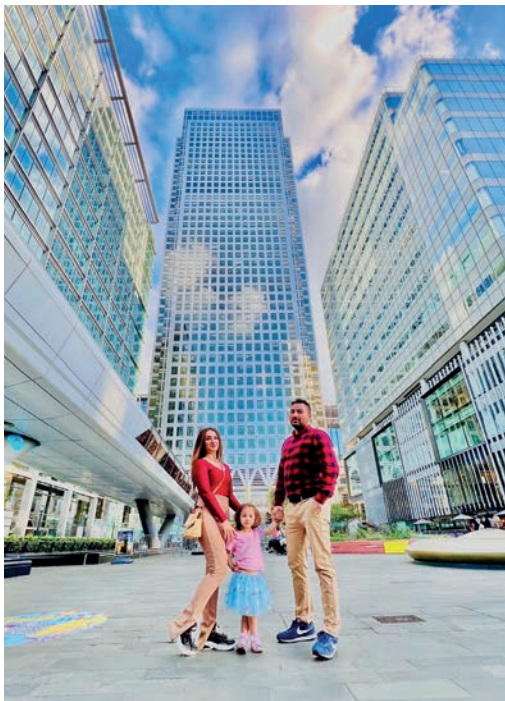
A year later, Haidari is working as a Cara sponsored legal research fellow at City, University of London. Afghanistan continues to deteriorate: men like those who stopped his taxi in the street now elevated to positions of high office. He is safe. His family is safe. But Afghanistan may be lost to him forever.

“I don’t think that we can go back to Afghanistan, because...” he pauses. “I can’t work there again. There is no educational infrastructure to go to. I don’t have any friends there anymore. I am still, and will always be, a target for the Taliban.”

R W

*All interviews in this Report were conducted and written by freelance journalist Rich Wordsworth - <https://www.richwordsworth.com/>*

Eraj Haidari and his family



## “I am in a warm bath!”

### Ukrainian cyber specialist flourishes after escaping Bucha with children

The Kotsiubas had a Russian tank to their right, another to their left. The soldiers who accompanied the vehicles were often drunk and would break into the empty suburban homes around the Kotsiubas’ to raid abandoned liquor cabinets and – once the booze had run out – to steal whatever else of value they could haul out from the rows of abandoned homes. When the soldiers hopped the fence into the Kotsiubas’ garden, they were surprised to find the house still inhabited, and were shooed away.

The Kotsiubas’ neighbours were not so lucky.

“[The Russians] said, ‘no-one will leave this territory,’” their son, Dr Igor Kotsiuba, recalls. “On the next street from them, a young woman and her child tried to escape.” He pauses. “They just killed them.”



Dr Igor Kotsiuba

Dr Igor Kotsiuba, a cybersecurity expert who fled Ukraine in the early days of the crisis with his two children, nine-year-old Valerie and three-year-old Lazar, is describing his parents’ experience from an office supplied by Durham University, where he has found a home and a job teaching cybersecurity students. He looks like a professor; the kind you remember fondly. There’s something in the eyes; he has a grin that curves all the way up, making them crease and twinkle. It’s an odd juxtaposition on the face of a man who just barely escaped a warzone. It makes him easy to talk to, and the reason we’re talking easy to forget.

The Russians and their tanks terrorised and ransacked his parents’ neighbourhood for 70 days.

They weren’t limiting themselves to essentials like food and medicine. Wall-mounted TVs were carried out to whoops and cheers. One by one, the Ukrainian homes

were being stripped, destroyed – scrubbed of their former occupancy.

But how do you fence 50” TVs on the frontline of a warzone? Kotsiuba explains, profit wasn’t the point. The impetus, he tells me, was spite. These ‘soldiers’, many recruited from failed post-Soviet towns and villages, were born into lives without hope and on a different plane of existence to their country’s ruling caste with its billion-dollar yachts and palaces. They were ferried to Ukraine with guns, bombs and a tacit encouragement to indulge their own petty jealousies. Not to liberate - but to rape and pillage.

“According to the recordings of Ukrainian special forces who tapped their phones,” says Kotsiuba, “[these Russians] are saying, ‘Oh, Ukrainians live so well in their beautiful houses! So, of course, for the Russians... it adds to the hate they have toward Ukrainians.’”

And so, the Russians came to Dr Kotsiuba’s home: a small town 30km north-west of Kyiv called Bucha.

Bucha appeared on front pages in the West when, after brief Russian occupation, the Ukrainians drove them out of the town and began to take stock of the damage. They found an epicentre of atrocities: bodies were exhumed from hastily dug mass graves – men, women, children; bound, raped, executed.

In Durham, Igor’s daughter, Valerie, is practising her ballet dancing. After their arrival, the local ballet group organised a secret donation to replace Valerie’s lost shoes and leotards. She has soaked up English - along with a soft North-Eastern accent which Kotsiuba attempts to emulate, beaming with pride.

“I am in a warm bath!” Kotsiuba exclaims (figuratively). “I arrived here as a single parent of two kids, and I found support everywhere; I mean, finding places in schools and nurseries in two days? That should be impossible. In every way, every dimension, people’s attitudes have been amazing.”

He is so caught up in his family’s good fortune, it seems unkind to ask if he will ever return to Ukraine. And why should he? Busy as the West is in aiding Ukraine’s war, there is scant discussion on how to rebuild a country which, even if it succeeds in its President’s stated goal of pushing Russia out entirely (including from Crimea), will be left partially in ruins. The haunting images of Mariupol – the wanton, hollow devastation from which nothing can be salvaged – could well be repeated as Russia loses ground. It will take a nation to win this war, but it will also take a nation to decide its future – and right now many Ukrainians unable to fight, including single parents like Kotsiuba, are fleeing: over a million over the border into Poland, some 900,000 to Germany and hundreds of thousands more across Europe. If they don’t come back, who will there be to rebuild not just the cities, but the country’s industry, stability and identity?

“I want...” Kotsiuba begins, then restarts. “I love Ukraine. I want to be useful and helpful for my country, for my nation. But I do not necessarily need to be there to do that. And there or in the UK, I want tangible results of my work. I want impact... A person must be at their most effective. And if the place I’m most effective now is the UK, then why not?”

R W

## Syria Programme: Bahriye Kemal

There's something impressively deft in how Dr Bahriye Kemal deflects almost any personal praise from her work with Fozya Aldared and her other Syrian writers. Together they are creating an anthology of Syrian women's writing. Kemal's credit, to the extent that she will accept any, extends up to the technical creation of this anthology and no further – especially not to its contents. She and Cara are the enablers, dealing with the bureaucratic and unglamorous side of publishing: pitching the product, hooking the publishers and so on. Aldared and her fellow contributors are the stars.

The anthology doesn't sound like the easiest pitch. From its inception, this was never the 'Story of Syria' from the early 2010s as told by – gasp! – a group of Syrian women. The point of the project was to give these writers a space to write. That they are women and Syrian isn't incidental, but it was never meant to dictate the subject matter: they are people first, and this book is a work of collective self-expression.

A fieldtrip at the Zeugma Archaeology museum in Turkey for some site-specific creative writing



"This group of women, with all their mixed experiences – they decided what they were going to do," says Kemal, a senior lecturer in post-colonial studies at the University of Kent. "They might have said, 'Do you know what? I don't want to talk about Syria. I want to do a project about plants. Or animals. Or water.' That was always the priority: where *they* would take us. I can facilitate, I have skills: I know how to write an anthology, how to write the proposal and tweak it and pitch it so the publishers here would be interested. But I would never make that decision [on content] for them."

Kemal's own background qualifies her, maybe uniquely, to oversee this production. Born in London to Turkish-Cypriot parents, both first-generation immigrants, she was the definition of a 'latch-key kid': her father, she says proudly, was the first ("or maybe *one* of the first," she amends) restaurant owner to serve both doner kebab and pizza of the kinds that late-night revellers graze on in herds. By the time her parents' workday ended, her school day was beginning.

The parenting she received came mostly from her devoutly religious grandmother.

She talks about her own displacement: the juxtaposition of her home life and hearing stories of Cyprus from her grandmother, who helped to mould her expectations of life in Cyprus – a place to which the family, Kemal says, was always *just* on the verge of returning. Trying to understand her place in the country – in the world – she remembers religious fasting when she was ten years old, and (relatively benign) acts of teenage rebellion.

"I never understood where I belonged," Kemal says. "I never understood why I was there. I was always told that, 'we are going to leave' [the UK, for Cyprus]. My grandmother is a hardcore nationalist who identifies with Turkey – but the other part of my family was completely politically opposed to that: 'We are Cypriot; we're not Turkish.' So conflict, displacement, and constant chaos... That was the centre of my world: not knowing where I belonged and wanting to belong, not wanting to speak Turkish and being forced to speak Turkish in the home, wanting to be English and eat English food and just reject everything that was being forced on me."

Only when she got to university did Kemal begin to understand not just her own history that is made up of multiple cultures, languages and geographies with a complex-mutable sense of belonging, but the power of narrative in the retelling of other people's histories. This connection is what bonded her to Aldared.

"There was a lot of common ground between Fozya and myself," says Kemal. "Through Cara we were able to really connect and find common ground in terms of our research. Cara, of course, is [usually] a programme where it's about the 'mentor' and the person who 'gets mentored'. But I didn't see our relationship like that with Fozya. I've learnt just as much from her as I hope she's learnt from me."

The bond between the pair is integral to the anthology's production: modesty and mistrust make the collection of these women's stories a challenge. Aldared is able to convince these women to share in a way that Kemal – despite her background and Cara affiliation – cannot.

"And the whole point of the project is those narratives, those voices, that are difficult to access," Kemal says. "Even if you [spoke to these people], they wouldn't be comfortable sharing their experiences with you. That's what's been so amazing: Fozya [and others from the project] just going round, physically, talking to people. This is a very difficult way to create an anthology – but we will get there... By going out there and physically collecting stories."

RW

## Syria Programme: Fozya Aldared

Fozya Aldared is a novelist and a chronicler. Since 2011, when the momentum of the Arab Spring broke against the bullets and barrel bombs of the Assad regime, Aldared has been watching, listening and collating – charting the destruction for a generation of women like her. The mothers, sisters and daughters of the Syrian conflict who are not afforded a voice; of whom only dutiful servility was expected as their country's families, history and identity were destroyed around them.

Aldared's work cost her dearly. First, the war took her two brothers – “killed by Assad's forces,” Aldared says. It broke apart her marriage and it threatened her children. By the time Aldared left Syria for Turkey, she had become untethered seemingly completely from her home country. But still she writes, and listens, collects and collates, the stories that Syria's women are culturally expected – on pain of arrest, torture and worse – to repress. It is a duty and it is a balm for what has been taken from her.

Fozya and her daughter



“I was suffering,” says Aldared in Arabic through a translator, “and I wanted to convey that to others. And I couldn't find any other way except writing: that's why I [chose to] put my experience into words ... I was trying to alleviate that suffering, the stress that I was under, the difficulty of the conditions surrounding me.”

“[But] after I left Syria, I kept writing. It was the only way for me to express myself, to eliminate the distress.”

Aldared answers every question carefully – she is, with the support of Cara's Syria Programme, now collecting stories for an anthology of Syrian women's writing. The Zoom call quality is poor, but everything – her expression, her cadence, the patient attentiveness as questions and answers are translated back and forth - says: ‘I want to be helpful’. While the translator explains what happened to her brothers, Aldared blinks grainily into the webcam, eyes

flicking back and forth. There is no tension in her face or how she sits - she seems simply to be waiting for the next question. For the next chance to be helpful.

In Syria, Aldared sought out other Syrian women. She spoke to them, comparing losses, horrors, survival strategies. Slowly, meticulously, she began

gathering an oral history of suffering. Her husband, a supporter of the regime, could not abide it: Aldared's work an act of feminist dissent against the regime. The pair had antithetical ideologies. And two small sons and a daughter.

“My children were very young,” says Aldared. “They weren't aware of what was happening around them. Their father and I were shielding them from the situation, keeping them away from any political discussion - because we were afraid they might hear us say something and then repeat it... in the wrong circles.”

Finally, Aldared fled to Turkey, taking her children with her. Turkey hosts the largest refugee population in the world; Aldared and her children were four among over 3½ million from Syria. Inevitably, there are huge strains, and Aldared has no shortage of stories to tell.

“What I have written about is the experiences of other women [in Turkey],” she says. “How the Turkish community – specifically the men – look at Syrian women. They consider [Syrian women] to be – and I apologise for using such terminology - ‘cheap’ women, who are easy to ‘get’. Women who could be ‘second wives’ even if they are not legally married - similar to a mistress.”

“I've been in similar positions myself,” she says. “However, I've been able to stand up for myself. Others were not able to. The type of women who are subjected to such practices... don't have any kind of support, anyone to rely on,” Aldared explains. “[They are] pushed to accept such behaviour.”

Aldared continues to document the stories of these women, with support from Cara. But with an election approaching in Turkey, the large Syrian diaspora in Turkey is becoming alarmed about a rise in populism and a scheme to send one million Syrians back to Syria – back to the lives they had fled. Aldared, with her two sons and a young daughter, has no desire to return.

“I have nothing left in Syria to return to,” she says. “I will be searching for a scholarship to continue my studies abroad, preferably in the UK. And of course, I will be continuing my writing.”

R W

## Syria Programme: Tom Parkinson

Tom Parkinson is leaning over his laptop at 10am in what sounds like quite a popular coffee shop. Beyond the camera, there's a steady, caffeinated mid-morning bustle, at which the conferencing software takes immediate umbrage. Per Zoom etiquette, we turn off our cameras and agree that this has absolutely made things better – but whether it's the coffee shop WiFi, the distance (Parkinson has just arrived in Turkey), or the subject matter (his work with Nidal Alajaj, the plight of Syrian refugees and the treatment of those Syrians caught in the geopolitical East-West limbo that Turkey has become), it's a meeting with markedly more hunching than is comfortable.

Parkinson is a Turkophile. In primary school, one of his best friends was Turkish Cypriot and he recalls how he often used to spend weekends with his friend and his family at their restaurant. That was cultural first contact: the food (although the restaurant was not, itself, Turkish) and the day-to-day, fly-on-the-wall life with a Turkish family, running a Turkish family business. Parkinson would go on to explore Turkey in his 20's, teach English in Istanbul as part of an Erasmus exchange, and study Turkish musical education.

Tom Parkinson



“My background is kind of all over the place,” says Parkinson. “I’m a musician and studied Music and French at undergrad. I did my PhD in Music education... so for a while I had one foot in arts and humanities and the other in applied social sciences through education. It just so happened, through professional chance and with the jobs that came up, that I ended up in an education department.”

This shared interest in education as a subject – and their shared experiences of Turkey – is what brought Parkinson together with Alajaj, now studying for his PhD at the University of Kent, where Parkinson heads the university’s Master’s Programme in Higher Education. They met at the Cara Syria Programme’s first workshop in Turkey dedicated to aiding academics in the social sciences.

“Previously, most of the people in the Programme had been from some type of science or engineering background – there weren’t many humanities people on the programme,” says Parkinson. “Nidal was there and we just got talking. This is often how these things work: there’s the formal delivery part of the programme, then there’s the informal part that happens around the periphery which is just as important: the networking and the meeting people and the relationship-building.”

Though Alajaj’s journey to Turkey was difficult – buffeted between the Syrian regime and extremist terror groups who would eventually seize his family home – his expertise both in English and in Education afforded him opportunities denied to the majority of Syrians in Turkey. He found work in a country in which, as Parkinson describes, English is an enormously lucrative advantage. But the experience has been soured by prejudice, deliberately curdled by populist politicians ahead of the 2023 elections. For Syrians – especially those without English or other sought-after skills – Turkey is becoming increasingly uncomfortable.

“Typically Syrians in Turkey earn very low wages,” says Parkinson, listing the most common complaints. “There are often restrictions on the type of work they can do. Some sectors they can’t work in, other sectors have a kind of ‘Turkish workers first’ policy... Another [complication] is the ‘informal economy’, particularly in the agricultural sector, where there’s a lot of cash-in-hand work which is also typically pretty low-paid.”

“There’s an election in June next year, so obviously Syria and the Syrians [in Turkey] are being exploited for political purposes by all parties on all sides. So there is a sense of hostility, manifested in different ways towards all Syrians from all political angles... It’s not only the preserve of the far right: this is across the political spectrum and compounded by the economic woes here.”

Nevertheless, Turkey remains one of the only ‘safe’ havens for Syrians escaping the regime. However loud the political sabre-rattling, many Syrians either cannot return or have nothing to return to. And for most, there is simply nowhere else that will take them.

“It’s very difficult as a Brit, from a country that’s taken so few refugees in recent years, to criticise Turks and their perspective on Syrians,” says Parkinson. “There are more than three million [Syrians in Turkey]. There’s no equivalent to that in the West.”

Despite Turkey’s supposed status as a safe harbour, a recent proposal to send one million Syrians back across the border has struck a populist chord with large parts of Turkey’s electorate. Whatever the eventual criteria, the risk to Syrians in Turkey is grave, and there is little information about who may be ‘returned’, how, when, and with what regard to their safety. A further indignity for a population that has spent over a decade in increasingly anxious exile.

“The main issue,” says Parkinson, “is whether it’s safe for Syrians to return to their own country and what ‘safe’ means. Who determines when it’s safe? The official policy is not necessarily known, and that fosters a sense of unease – and fear – among Syrians about what their destiny will be.” But he leaves little doubt that, in his view, going back to Syria is still very far from safe.

RW

## Syria Programme: Nidal Alajaj

### “They burned them alive. That’s what used to happen.”

Long before Nidal Alajaj fled Syria, his ‘everyday’ life as a university lecturer would have been almost unrecognisable to a Western academic. Until 2016, he says, the whole of Syria had just four universities. In his faculty alone, Alajaj had around 54,000 students. For comparison, University College London (the largest in the UK) hosts around 42,000 students, total.

“People worked hard,” says Alajaj. “I used to work at the university and at some private institutions as well, because in Syria sometimes you need to do more than one job to survive, financially. So I and a lot of other Syrian academics used to work a lot of hours every week. That was OK. But at the same time, I think it affected the teaching and learning quality. The large number of students and the lack of academic resources meant that we didn’t have enough time to properly assess or communicate with our students.”

This barrier between student and teacher was, Alajaj speculates, a deliberate act of control. Everything from the number of universities down to their curricula and promotional recruiting materials was tightly controlled by state intelligence services, which openly kept offices on campus.

“They controlled everybody,” he says. “Students, academics – everybody. They interfered in everything. You are not allowed, as a student or an academic, to speak openly. You always thought: ‘Big Brother is watching.’”

Alajaj refers to the beginning of the revolution simply as “the difficult times”. Suddenly, the number of state intelligence agents doubled, even tripled. Students weren’t just harassed, but made into examples: intelligence service thugs would storm lectures and wrench supposed offenders out of their seats, beating and swearing as they dragged them from the hall in front of their classmates.

“Can you imagine the situation?” asks Alajaj. “You feel like a coward, because you can’t do anything. And for the lecturers, the situation is [even] more complicated because they will kill you. Other people: yes, they would take them, detain them, beat them, torture them... But if you’re an academic, they know that when you say something, thousands of people are listening.”

That the intelligence services would come for Alajaj eventually was inevitable. He was driving his car home at night when he was set upon by a gang who smashed his windows with rocks and tried to force him out of the vehicle with sticks and clubs.

“I didn’t stop,” he says. “It would have meant death.”

The situation during ‘the difficult times’ became harder. At demonstrations, the Assad regime was executing protestors in the street, firing indiscriminately into crowds. This was not simple, brutish crowd control: Alajaj describes the hatred that was deliberately stoked between the country’s enforcers and the ‘educated

elite’. Recalling one such protest, Alajaj becomes visibly upset. He apologises profusely as his voice breaks.

“I knew two students who were studying at the medical school,” he says. “They were in their fourth year and they volunteered to help those who were injured after one of these demonstrations. They were stopped at a checkpoint and [the guards] found some medical supplies in their car. They detained them, tortured them... They killed them, under torture.”

Alajaj is on the edge of tears.

“They burned them alive. That’s what used to happen.”

Alajaj fled soon after. The situation in Aleppo was untenable and he sought sanctuary in his hometown in the countryside. It didn’t take long for that, too, to become a conflict zone: first the Al Nusra Front arrived, followed shortly by ISIS fighters. He fled to Turkey, abandoning his home. He parlayed his skills into teaching and training jobs, working with other Syrians living in exile. But the unclear, not well-developed regulations related to Syrians living under the ‘temporary protection status’ made life much more challenging.

“The moment you become a refugee, your name becomes ‘refugee,’” Alajaj recalls. “They forget everything about you: ‘So you’re a professor, so what? You are still a refugee’. The word ‘Syrian’ is used by some racists as an insult to mean, ‘You are inferior. You are not welcome. You have to leave.’”

Alajaj came into contact with Cara’s Syria Programme by accident. One day, one of his students called him out of the blue. “He said, ‘I’m in Istanbul now. I am attending a Cara workshop and the head of the programme would like to talk to you.’ I just said, ‘OK!’ He didn’t give me any other options! The head of the Programme said, ‘We heard from your students that you have a good [reputation] - let’s meet.’ Then he started teaching an English language course to a group of Syrian academics in Gaziantep, Turkey.

Later he joined Cara’s Arts and Humanities strand and met Dr Parkinson in the first workshop in Istanbul. It was through Cara that he got a research incubation visit to the University of Kent in 2019. Cara also helped Alajaj get a partial fee waiver to start his PhD at the same University in 2020 where he is conducting research on academic development in higher education and investigating ways to help Syrian academics in exile keep and develop their skills.

“[Cara] helped me restore my academic identity and helped me think as an academic again,” he says. “I’ve started to think that, ‘Yes, I should get my Ph.D.’, and ‘Yes, in the future I can participate in rebuilding the higher education in my country – when it is liberated from this horrible regime.’”

RW

Nidal Alajaj



## FIRST IMPRESSIONS FROM CARA'S SCOTLAND MANAGER

At the time of writing, it's August in Edinburgh and the return of our famous International Festivals. What a fantastic place to be, although I have found myself reflecting on a different perspective when the 'one o'clock gun' from Edinburgh Castle and our nightly fireworks loudly sound, as for me these noises have never come with fear.

I joined Cara in Spring 2022, as the new Cara Scotland Manager, part of my wider role as Senior Partnerships Advisor at the University of Edinburgh.



Tessa Bell

I attend weekly meetings with the Cara team and have been impressed by the level of dedication shown from initial enquiry to organising fellowships/placements and beyond. I have had a warm welcome from the team, helped by the 'new normal' of hybrid working and look forward to welcoming Cara colleagues in Scotland and visiting the office in London, hopefully soon.

Shortly after I started working with Cara, I was able to help with arrangements for two new Fellows' arrival in Scotland from Afghanistan and Yemen. This brings the total number of Fellows being hosted at Scottish institutions to 11, with a further 4 fellows arriving in the next few weeks. They are to be the first of many new arrivals to Scotland over the coming year, for example, the University of Edinburgh announced their support of a further 10 new Fellowships, to date the most generous financial support of any University in the UK. Important discussions are also happening in universities about the need for further wrap-around support for Cara fellows.

Edinburgh has been focusing on enhanced pastoral, as well as financial, support by introducing a non-academic mentor scheme and will also recruit two PhD students to help with induction and general support. I look forward to learning from and discussing examples of best practice with other colleagues in the Scottish higher education sector.

Cara's work in Scotland really is going from strength to strength, with 16 of the 19 higher education institutions in Scotland now committed to supporting Cara. In the coming year, I am really looking forward to the next Cara Scotland conference, which the University of Glasgow is kindly hosting on 16 March 2023. Please get in touch with me on my email below if you would like to find out more.

I'm really proud of the work already happening across the sector in Scotland, and I have been really moved by the goodwill and eagerness of people getting in touch to help; from a friendly estates department driving miles to pick up a coffee table to help a new family to set up their home, those volunteering to be non-academic mentors, to staff lobbying internally to ringfence more funding. As a sector, we're doing well – but can we do still more?

**Tessa Bell**  
Cara Scotland Manager  
bell@cara.ngo

## CARA'S FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME: FELLOWS' STORIES

### From Kabul to Edinburgh

I chose to return to Afghanistan, when I completed my LLM in the United States in 2017. I rejected all the advice to leave Afghanistan or to leave the academic work, for economic reasons. It wasn't pleasant to work anywhere else rather than academia, and it wasn't something I was interested in.

To contribute to the strengthening of rule of law in Afghanistan, beside teaching at the prestigious university of Afghanistan, the Kabul University, I took part in other rule of law activities, as well. Until the collapse of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan I was responsible for the 'Huquq General Directorate' and later the 'Justice General Directorate for Kabul City' of the Ministry of Justice. I worked beyond working hours and worked so hard to bring positive reforms in the Huquq departments of the country to provide a better, transparent, speedy, and rule-based service in all civil and commercial disputes, before the courts' proceedings and later for the enforcement of courts' decisions. I was so

Amanullah Ahmadzai  
at Edinburgh Law  
School





energetic to enforce all those rulings that had remained unenforced for years. I was so brave to not care about all the threats and challenges from both terrorist groups and bullies challenging the rule of law and courts' order.

As long as I remember, I have been raised with threat and danger. However, when the regime collapsed I felt useless and being insulted for the first time. I lost all hope. I had chosen to work with the Ministry of Justice not only to bring reforms but also to bring together my practice and academic experience and work on my further studies for my PhD and research. After the collapse of the regime, I was left with no work for almost ten months until I left the country, but I couldn't write even a short piece for all that time.

That situation reminded me of my friends' advice. I had been told that academia in Afghanistan has no future and I would be alone and useless. It was a time of pressure and threat, but Cara revived my hope. I got the hope to contribute to the enhancement of knowledge and wellbeing of all human beings. I got the opportunity to continue my research and academic contribution to the development of my war-torn Afghanistan. Though several people and friends also helped me, Cara has given me the feeling that I belong to the family of academia and am not alone.

The journey took more than eight months under high pressure to get to the UK. I was feeling the honest support and hard work of the Cara team during all that time. I do not forget being helped by Cara team beyond official working hours. From very minor issues to the important parts of this journey, my family and I have not been left alone. All of this support brought me to one of the best universities in the UK, the University of Edinburgh, where I have been given the opportunity and full support to conduct research and enhance both my research and teaching skills. This has opened a new window of opportunity and hope to me. I got a lot of support from all the kind people around me at the university. I am very grateful for the continued support of the Cara team.

#### **Amanullah Ahmadzai**

Research Fellow, Edinburgh Law School  
University of Edinburgh

*“I am really happy and appreciate your support in addition to useful information or links that you always provide us. Many thanks for all your efforts and generosity, I really appreciate that.”*

#### **Cara Fellow from Syria**

## **From Syria to Chester: The Fellow's story**

I would simply say that, thanks to Cara and the University of Chester, I have managed not just to improve my skills but also to successfully integrate into the academic community. The last two years before leaving Syria were really difficult for me. Simply going to work became dangerous, you never knew if you might get shot in the middle of the street. That is when I applied to Cara. Since that day and up till now, everyone has been friendly and supportive. Cara's team spared no effort to help me with the university application, visa arrangements, accommodation, and even the smallest details like booking a taxi from the airport to the University!

The University of Chester has also spared no effort to help me adapt. The staff have been very friendly and supportive, starting with the Vice-Chancellor and including all the academic staff in my Department, especially my direct supervisors, who helped me reach a higher academic level.

So, you might ask: how has this experience changed my life?

Well, I can say that thanks to Cara and the University of Chester, I got a PhD placement after completing my MSc. I was also offered a position as a Visiting Lecturer at Chester Medical School to help current MSc students. Simultaneously, I was offered a placement as an observer physician at the Department of Internal Medicine in an NHS hospital, and finally, I am also helping with a locally conducted randomised controlled trial in the North-West of England. Thanks to Cara and the support of the University of Chester, I am one step closer to achieving my dreams of becoming a researcher, lecturer, and physician.

I still remember my first experience here in Chester, where I went out to get some groceries. I remember I was still nervous about speaking English, as it isn't my first language. I met a very lovely lady who offered some help and asked me where I came from. After I told her, she told me that it must've been a very long trip for you, but well done - you made it! This sentence echoed in my head that, yes, you made it, but you still have a long way ahead of you. Today, having been in the UK for one and a half years I reflect on this sentence, and I know that this journey is not over yet. One day in the future, I will use the skills that I developed here to help in the reconstruction and development process of my country, Syria, and I will proudly say that I was and will always be part of Cara and the University of Chester.

#### **Allam**

## Chester: The Supervisor's Story: Chester Medical School

My name is Dr Hanady Hamdallah, Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader for MSc Cardiovascular Disease, Chester Medical School, University of Chester.

I well remember the day I received an email from the Executive Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Life Science, Professor John Alcolado, asking about the possibility of recruiting a Cara Fellow (Allam) in MSc Cardiovascular Disease. This was the first time I had heard about Cara. I researched Cara's activities and discovered the great support that Cara provides for academics at risk often living in life threatening circumstances. I eagerly reviewed Allam's application and was impressed by his previous work and experience. I was delighted to accept his application and the university offered Allam a place on our MSc Cardiovascular Disease programme.

The MSc programme helped Allam to develop the academic and research skills to expand his networks. My experience of working with Allam has exceeded my expectations as he is a hardworking and self-motivated student with outstanding communication skills. I was very pleased when Allam finished



his MSc degree with distinction in all the modules, alongside completing his MRCP (Membership of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of the United Kingdom) (Part One and Part Two) independently. Moreover, he managed to publish a case report in a prestigious medical journal as well as he published his research dissertation.

During his dissertation project Allam showed that he is an ideal candidate for a PhD. Cara and the University of Chester took active steps in facilitating and offering Allam a PhD opportunity in Chester Medical School. Allam's PhD research aims to improve the patients' awareness and knowledge about stroke and its risk factors.

Allam is also a Visiting Lecturer in the Chester Medical School. He has been encouraged to join the Talent Programme delivered by the University of Chester's Centre for Academic Innovation and Development (CAID), which will allow him to learn more about the basic requirements for teaching and learning in higher education in the UK.

Supervising Allam has made me appreciate the exceptional work undertaken by Cara. Allam's story has demonstrated how Cara has made a life-changing difference in the career of a talented academic like Allam and significantly how Allam's work will go on to improve the lives of many others living in crisis situations. I am so proud to be part of the University of Chester that has made this possible, particularly with the active involvement of the Vice Chancellor, Executive Dean of the Faculty, the Head of the Department and the immense support from the University's International Office. I am looking forward to continuing supporting Allam in the coming years to complete his PhD successfully. I hope we have a long and successful collaboration with Cara, supporting students for many years.

### Dr Hanady Hamdallah

Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader for MSc Cardiovascular Disease,  
Chester Medical School,  
University of Chester

*“Thanks to all Cara team  
for the overwhelming support.”*

**Cara Fellow from Syria**

## From Herat to Cardiff Metropolitan

I was the luckiest person that I found Cara, I was a lecturer at university and had a good reputation in our community and dozens of students and friends but suddenly Taliban took over my country and I lost all of them. I was hopeless, but then I found Cara and Cardiff Metropolitan University and they accepted me as a fellow and a research student in DMan (Doctor of Management). After a long

journey with lots of pressure and stress finally, I reached the UK.

When I reached the UK, I breathed, I saw, and I felt real freedom in my life for the first time, as I had the experience of being threatened by the Taliban even before they captured the country due to my job and my lifestyle as a modern woman. I was one of the first women that used to drive in a very conservative city like Herat, and soon I become a role model for other girls. Now I am not afraid of being judged for what I wear or for expressing my ideas, I am not leaving my home thinking that I might not make it



Shahira Shahir

back as an explosion might happen. I am feeling secure here, and it is all because of the Cara organisation.

I started studying DMan at Cardiff Metropolitan University in January 2022 and they helped and supported me, from the other side Cara was financially supporting me as well and introduced a mentor to me. I came alone but I felt I found a big family here with lots of support. As I was writing this piece, I heard that officially I am expelled from Herat University, but I am happy as I am still in an academic environment here. Now I passed six months of reviews and I passed three papers and I learned a lot in terms of research methods. I am going to build my life again here.

**Shahira Shahir**  
Cardiff Metropolitan University

## From Kabul to Exeter

I am a research fellow from Afghanistan at Camborne School of Mines (CSM), University of Exeter, Penryn campus, Cornwall. After the completion of my PhD in Analytical Chemistry in 2012 I worked as a lecturer in the Zawul University in Kabul, while simultaneously starting a consulting service to industrial manufacturers. My activities continued by contribution in establishing of analytical state-of-the-art laboratories in the north of Afghanistan, where we conducted several international and national projects. Most of the projects were supported by international AID programmes such as UKAID, development for international development (DFID) and USAID. Since 2019 our activities became restricted because it was not possible to travel to the provinces because of lack of security.

The situation became even worse day to day specially for individuals who worked with the international organizations and belonged to minorities in Afghanistan. Big changes in the circumstances happened in my country in mid Aug 2021. One of my friends in the UK introduced me to Cara. I applied online and I fled to Kabul with my family, where we lived there hidden in fear and feeling hopeless.

I prepared my proposal for a research project in CSM with the support of my supervisor Professor Frances Wall, the Head of CSM, Prof Steve Hesselbo and environmental specialist Dr Peter Whitbread-Abrutat and submitted it to Cara. The project was accepted and supported financially by the Camborne School of Mines Trust, the University of Exeter and Cara.

Cara continuously supported us, by coordinating with the University of Exeter, supporting us to traveling to a third country, preparing the necessary documents for visa applications, and also finding temporary accommodation when we arrived in the UK. After a long difficult journey, we finally settled in the UK and I am now researching at CSM. My academic/research activities started in the field of environmental intelligence, geochemistry and geothermal

Dr Hadi



energy. I hope that I will be able to use all experience and knowledge I have gained from the academic centres and industrial sectors in Afghanistan. The support of Cara and CSM saved my life and my family. I am very happy that I am able to continue my academic/professional life.

**Dr Hadi**  
PhD, Analytical Chemistry,  
Research Fellow, CSM  
University of Exeter

## From Ethiopia to London

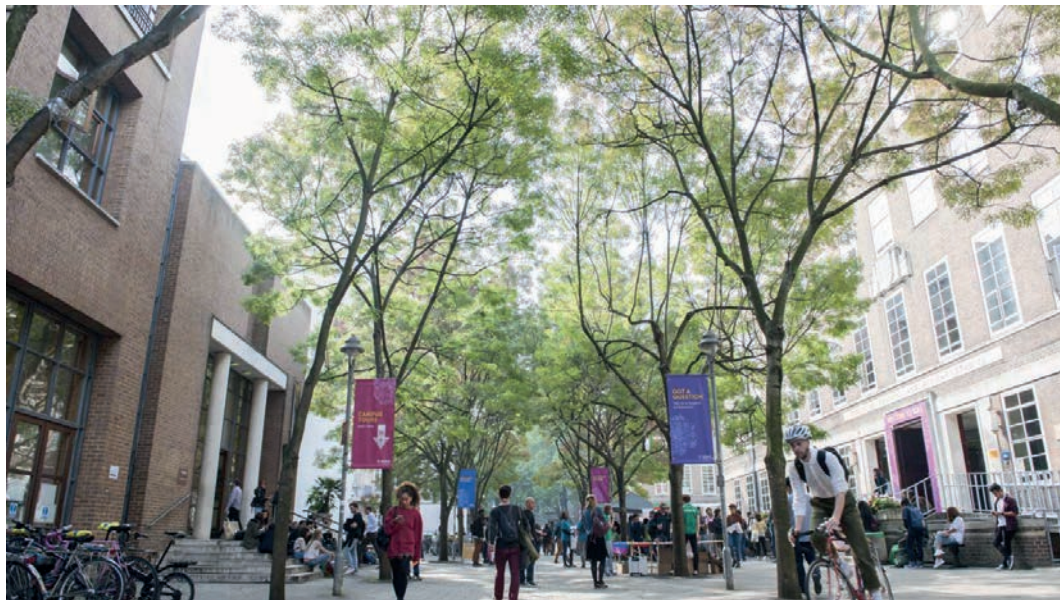
I am a postdoctoral researcher from Ethiopia. The war between the Ethiopian government and the armed forces in the Oromia and Tigray regions had affected my academic career and threatened my life and the life of my family in Ethiopia. As an academic, I condemned any form of violence that threatened the life of human beings, and that made me even more vulnerable for the government as well as the armed group that sought my support. Eventually, I learned that not supporting either group would cost my life and my family's. I discussed my case with my PhD supervisor and the Doctoral School at SOAS where I had been studying remotely, through which I was able to know Cara.

Cara immediately responded and along with SOAS, they have given me a postdoctoral research place and exceptional support. Everything, from securing the funds for me and my family to visa processing and to travel arrangement was done so quickly. More amazingly, Cara sent me money while I was still in Ethiopia to support me with the expenses for accommodation and travel between my home and the Ethiopian capital where the application needed to be submitted. That was beyond my expectations and, finally, I was able to smoothly settle in London with my family and embarked on my academic activities.

Cara is scoring extraordinary achievements in its objectives of saving human life, protecting free thinking and knowledge production. I am extremely grateful for Cara and those who rescued me and my family and finally brought me to the place where I can contribute to the advancement of knowledge.

### A Cara Fellow from Ethiopia

SOAS, University  
of London



## The view from a Cara University 'contact point'



Alan Mackay

As a founding member of Cara, the University of Edinburgh has a long history of providing sanctuary and education for those seeking protection. Over recent years we have been working to strengthen and extend our partnership with Cara as a key strand of our international engagement. In June this year, responding to emergencies in Afghanistan and Ukraine and rising levels of forced displacement across the world, we announced that we would be increasing our support to host a further ten at-risk scholars and their families for two-year academic placements - ensuring that we are able to support fifteen Cara Scholars at the University.

We know financial support alone is not enough to support our scholars and we have also been working to further enhance our wrap-around support for Scholars by introducing mentors from across the University, recruiting students to support our Scholar Liaison programme and assisting with the challenges of transition and setting up home in a new location. We continue to raise awareness of Cara across the University and how colleagues can support our partnership through regular communication and highlighting ways to be involved. The response continues to be inspiring – whether it is colleagues from Estates volunteering to assist with delivering furniture to a new arrival or increasing numbers of colleagues directly contributing to Cara's funding campaigns.

In our fast-changing world, we continue to support, champion and enable the free exchange of ideas, people, knowledge and understanding as an integral part of our international engagement. Our work with at-risk academics through Cara directly supports this, our commitments to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and our core values as a University – ensuring we are inclusive and accessible to all and make the world a better place. Our partnership with Cara forms an important pillar of our international engagement. We will continue to work together to strengthen our tradition of welcoming and supporting academics from all across the world who find themselves forcibly displaced, providing sanctuary and an opportunity to rebuild lives and careers.

### Alan Mackay

Deputy Vice-Principal International and Director of Edinburgh Global

## THE 'RESEARCHERS AT RISK' PROGRAMME – CARA'S EXPERIENCE

For several years we and others had been making the case, as best we could, for some UK equivalent of the German Philipp Schwartz Initiative (PSI), a programme with Government support that allows German universities to bid for funds to support threatened scholars. The scheme has been a significant success in Germany, providing support for hundreds of at-risk academics, and Cara has been involved from the beginning (see 'International Partnerships' on page 46). In the UK context we imagined this not as a replacement for what Cara does – far from it! – but as a valuable addition, providing funds to help researchers at risk who might already have, or be able to establish, contact with a potential host UK institution, while Cara would continue its rescue mission work, mainly helping those who are in danger in their own countries and have no existing links to help them to escape. The UK, through Cara in its various guises over the years, has had a leading role in the field of academic rescue in Europe since 1933 and, while we wish PSI and its French equivalent, PAUSE, every success, we wanted to see the UK build on its existing strong track record.

We were therefore very pleased when we were approached by colleagues at the British Academy in early March, with the news that they felt the time was right, in view of the Ukraine crisis, to revisit some work that we and they had done earlier and put together a bid for funds to help threatened researchers fleeing that conflict. We were happy to share our own experience and that of working with the PSI and, within just days, we heard that the Government was considering putting in some £3 million. This was soon confirmed, and, after a lot of hard work by our colleagues at the British Academy, the other national academies and Government Departments, the scheme was launched on 14 April, just before Easter. We initially thought that the funds – supplemented by £0.5m from the Nuffield Foundation – would cover about 40 awards, and the first two application rounds brought us close to this figure, but in late June the Government added another £9.8m to the 'pot', and SAGE added a further £50,000. This allowed us to squeeze in two more application rounds before the summer break, with two more scheduled for the autumn.

The first four rounds agreed 87 awards, mostly to female researchers since men of military age are expected to stay and help with the war effort. Many have young children with them. In addition to the work we did in the preparatory stages, Cara (as with the PSI) has a role in confirming the 'at risk' status of the applicants; Cara's Executive Director also sits on the Selection Panel, and we manage all the payments, once the awards have been agreed. It has been a real privilege to do this, understanding very well through our own work that, once close family have been taken care of, the most important thing for anyone who has been through a crisis such as this is to find a way to continue their work and to keep in touch with their networks of colleagues, to bring some normality and purpose back into their lives.

At the moment, this programme is for a single year of applications only, with awards lasting up to two years, and focused almost exclusively on Ukraine, but before the summer we were working with officials from BEIS, FCDO and others on a possible longer-term successor. We hope to be able to take this work forward in the autumn, possibly with a broader focus, providing much-needed extra support to other researchers around the world.

***“I am really grateful for everything Cara has given me, as I wouldn't be at this stage without this amazing team support.”***

**Cara Fellow from Syria**

***“Starting communication with Cara kept light of hope in our heart. The professional and friendly behaviour of Cara managers, prompt feedback to our questions and inquiries, their proficiency in official paperwork & communication with university and other organizations is strongly appreciated. I have been impressed by all the organisation and all that has been done by Cara.”***

**Cara Fellow from Afghanistan**

## THE 'RESEARCHERS AT RISK' PROGRAMME: PROFESSOR IHOR RUSHCHENKO

### Kharkiv under attack

Around 5 am on February 24, 2022, millions of Ukrainians, including myself, woke up to powerful explosions. The bloody, cruel, and the largest European invasion since World War 2 began. Putin's goal is to destroy Ukraine as a state and Ukrainians as a distinctive ethnic group and to transform those who survive into Russians. The goal of Ukrainians is to preserve the integrity and sovereignty of the country and to force the aggressor to retreat.

Kharkiv is my home town and the second largest city in Ukraine, home to about 1.5 million people. It is a city of science and education, with about 40 higher educational institutions, hundreds of schools, colleges, and various educational and cultural institutions. The Kharkiv National University named after V N Karazin, where I used to work before the invasion, is known as one of the leading universities in Ukraine. It has 23 faculties and institutes, about 2,000 teachers and scientists, and more than 17,000 students.

Alongside other targets of cultural and social importance such as theatres, hospitals and schools, Russian forces deliberately target universities. As of March



2022, V N Karazin National University had no single undamaged building left. The university management center was evacuated to Poltava. However, not all students were able to leave the city. In one of the dormitories, students moved to live in the basement under a multi-story building, helped each other, cooked food together, and even continued studying online.

The same fate befell the Pedagogical University named after Skovoroda, which is also located in Kharkiv. Hryhorii Skovoroda was a philosopher-enlightener, a symbol for freedom-loving Ukrainians. In 2022, Kharkiv was preparing to celebrate the philosopher's 300th anniversary. The university trained Ukrainian teachers and was a centre of Ukrainian culture.

Although the Ukrainian military pushed back Russian forces in May, the shelling continues with the use of cruise and ballistic missiles, which are launched every day and night from the territory of Russia. Kharkiv does not give up, the mayor's office is doing everything possible to maintain the city's vital activities, communal services are dismantling the rubble, filling deep sinkholes (up to 7 meters deep from heavy rockets), restoring water and electricity supply, supporting city transport, and running the underground services. The city council even planted flowers in the spring, which was an old tradition of the city. However, the lives of about 1,000 civilians who died during the half-year war under the bombs cannot be brought back, and people who have chosen to stay in Kharkiv risk their lives daily.

For me as an academic who had to leave everything behind to flee the violence in April 2022, this Fellowship represents an invaluable opportunity to continue my research in the safety of the United Kingdom. I am very thankful to Cara, the British Academy and the team at King's College London that have been providing continuous support for my application and my academic activities.

**Professor Ihor Rushchenko**

*"The only thing I could say is thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to dream again, to learn, to build a future. You saved my life! Please keep doing what you are doing, it is absolutely amazing!!"*

**Cara Fellow from Syria**

## A HOME IN LONDON FOR CARA FELLOWS: INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS HOUSE (ISH)



International Students House, 229 Great Portland Street

International Students House is proud to have been partnering with Cara to offer free accommodation for fellows, their spouses and families since May 2016. As a trusted provider of accommodation and support for London students since 1965, ISH's vision of establishing a safe community for students in which to foster international understanding and positive change fits well with Cara's work to support academics in danger or at risk of persecution in their home countries. In the words of one of our very first joint fellows, Ibrahim from Syria: *"ISH is a place where we meet as guests and depart as families, a bridge that we erect over our boundaries, a shelter where we convert our dreams into realities and accommodation that has become a home for different nationalities."*

Our central London location means that we are in easy reach of many Cara university partners, such as Birkbeck, SOAS and King's College London. We have also provided a home for students whose universities are further afield, but who so value the supportive community found at ISH that they decide to stay with us.

We have housed fellows from Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Ethiopia and Afghanistan, both in single rooms at our main Great Portland Street building and in a number of our family flats. We have held welcome teas for incoming fellows, seen PhDs successfully completed, and even twin babies born. The Fellows enrich the international community at ISH, each one making their own contribution, either serving as Resident Advisers, delivering a speech during a Garden Party and Royal visit, co-organising bootcamp fitness sessions for other residents during lockdown, or sharing their stories, cultures and food.

We know that these remarkable young people will go on to achieve great things and make a positive contribution in the world. As an organisation we are so pleased that we have been able to play a small part in enabling this success and remain committed to supporting more at-risk academics for many years to come.

**Dr Sharon Bolton**  
Dean of Student Life

## UK PARTNERSHIPS

Our key relationship in 2021/22 was again with all the members of our 'UK Universities and Research Network', without whose practical and financial support we simply couldn't function. The dramatic events in Afghanistan and Ukraine, in particular, refocused attention on the dangers facing academics in desperate situations. We were delighted to welcome eight new Network members in the course of the year, including two research institutes, and we look forward to building further on this in the year ahead – the more partners we have, the more we can do. A full list of the Network members is on page 45.

We value very highly our relationships with the UK's national academies and other learned societies, and we worked very closely in 2021/22 with the British Academy in the 'Researchers at Risk' programme (see p. 38). In October 2021 we and the Royal Society jointly hosted our eighth annual 'Science and Civilisation' Lecture, which had been delayed from 2020 by the pandemic. Professor Michael Ignatieff, who stepped down as President and Rector of the Central European University in Summer 2021, spoke on 'Academic Freedom: Right or Privilege?' A full video recording is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDV2Fm-1Vdo&t=16s>. We look forward to our 2022 lecture, which will be given by Sir Jeremy Farrar in November; he will speak on 'Philanthropy and Leadership in a Changing World'. In December, the Royal Society and British Academy supported the Cara Syria Programme (SP) online Symposium, 'Voices from the Syrian Academic Community: Unique insights & contributions to research policy and practice'. The event gave our SP participants an opportunity to share their research with a wider audience and to demonstrate the value of their local knowledge, expertise, experience and networks. Each day was themed, with over 50 Cara SP-supported studies clustered around sub-themes which were linked to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

We were delighted to be nominated by Times Higher Education as the 'Charity Partner' for their November 2022 Awards Ceremony, and are very much looking forward to the evening.

We continued our close collaboration with the Trustees of the Sir Hans Krebs Trust in 2021/22, for a seventh year. The late Sir Hans Krebs was a Nobel Prize winner who was supported by Cara in the 1930s when he was forced to leave Nazi Germany, and the Trust's awards are funded from the sale, by his family, of his Nobel Prize medal. Six more Cara Fellows benefited from Sir Hans Krebs Trust/Cara Fellowships this year, which help to ensure that future generations of biomedical scientists who are prevented from carrying out research in their own country because of persecution or oppression have the opportunity to continue their important work. In December 2021 we were delighted also to receive support from Springer Nature, with the launch of the Springer Nature-Cara Fellowship Awards, which will help fund three Cara Fellows over three years. Throughout 2021/22 we also continued our cooperation with the Society for Applied Microbiology (SfAM) and the Microbiology Society, who each generously provide support for a Cara Fellow in their special field, and began to develop a strong relationship with the Royal Society of Chemistry.

## UK NETWORK UNIVERSITIES AND INSTITUTES, 2021/22

In 2022 we were happy to partner with UCL in their *Academic Sanctuary Fellowship Scheme*, which aims to support up to 15 academics being displaced as a result of the crisis in Ukraine. This scheme is in addition to UCL's existing generous support for Cara Fellows. In 2021/22 we also continued our cooperation with the Northern Consortium (NC), a charity established in 1987 by leading universities in Northern England, whose *NC-Cara Fellowships* make it possible for us to support academics in danger to study or work at NC member universities. We were also grateful for the continuing support of the Past and Present Society, for a Fellow at Oxford and for another who is undertaking a placement at Birmingham; and we have established a new partnership with Duolingo, a US-based educational technology company which produces apps for language learning and provides language certification; they greatly assisted the Fellowship Programme during the past year by providing our Fellows with free vouchers for their online English language tests. The British Council in Turkey also supports our Syria Programme (SP) by running 6-monthly APTIS English language tests as an objective marker of progress. Advance HE has partnered with the SP, waiving Fellowship fees for up to twelve Higher Education Academy (HEA) applicants a year; and Cambridge University Press continues to support our SP's EAP work, by providing pro bono online licences for its Cambridge English Empower textbooks.

In Spring 2022 we nominated our sixth '*Cumberland Lodge Scholar*'. Cumberland Lodge, the educational foundation in Windsor Great Park, offered in 2017 to accept a Cara PhD student each year for a two-year scholarship, inspired by our shared history as organisations founded in response to the rise of Nazism in 1930s Germany. As a result, at any given time two Cara PhD Fellows benefit from the Lodge's programme, practising valuable skills in critical thinking, communications, networking and public engagement.

We are very grateful also to long-standing partners, Goodenough College and to International Students House (see p. 42), who provide generous scholarships to cover accommodation costs for Cara Fellows in London; and to our new partner, Zebra Housing Association, who provided a heavily-discounted housing for a Cara Fellow in London.

In March 2022 our Director, Stephen Wordsworth, was appointed as Chancellor of Cardiff Metropolitan University. Cardiff Met, who are now hosting two Cara Fellows, asked him to take up the position as a reflection of their close alignment with Cara's work, their role also as a University of Sanctuary and their aspiration to be a force for good in developing education, research and innovation to tackle global challenges. Stephen greatly enjoyed presiding at their Graduation Week in July 2022 – despite having to wear all his robes on the hottest week of the year! – and looks forward to working with them in 2022/23 and beyond.

Stephen Wordsworth,  
Cara Executive  
Director, at Cardiff  
Met's Graduation  
ceremony



In the course of 2021/22 we welcomed six more universities to the UK Network – Anglia Ruskin, Birmingham City, Buckingham New, Derby, Gloucestershire, the Royal Veterinary College – and the first two research institutes – the Wellcome Sanger Institute and the British Institute of International and Comparative Law. As a result, we changed the name of the Network to the 'UK Universities and Research Network', and it now has 131 members. Network members generously offer fee waivers and often accommodation and financial support for Cara Fellows and their families. The great majority also contribute a voluntary annual subscription too, to help cover our running costs. We thank them all. Equally, we thank those many members of their staffs, who give so generously of their time, pro bono, to help our Fellows and to support our Syria Programme. Our work would be impossible without their enthusiasm and commitment.

Aberdeen | Abertay | Aberystwyth | Anglia Ruskin | Aston | Bangor | Bath | Bath Spa | Bedfordshire | Birkbeck | Birmingham | Birmingham City | Bournemouth | Bradford | Brighton | Bristol | British Institute of International and Comparative Law | Brunel | Buckingham | Buckingham New | Cambridge | Canterbury Christ Church | Cardiff | Cardiff Metropolitan | Central Lancashire | Chester | Chichester | City University London | City & Guilds of London Art School | Courtauld Institute | Coventry | Cumbria | De Montfort | Derby | Dundee | Durham | East Anglia | East London | Edinburgh | Edinburgh Napier | Essex | Exeter | Glasgow | Glasgow Caledonian | Glasgow School of Art | Goldsmiths College | Goodenough College | Greenwich | Heriot Watt | Hertfordshire | Highlands and Islands | Huddersfield | Hull | Imperial College | UCL | Kent | Keele | King's College London | Kingston | Lancaster | Leeds | Leeds Beckett | Leeds Trinity | Leicester | Lincoln | Liverpool | Liverpool Hope | Liverpool John Moores | Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine | London | London Business School | London Metropolitan | London School of Economics | London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine | London South Bank | Loughborough | Manchester | Manchester Metropolitan | Middlesex | Newcastle | Newman University Birmingham | Northampton | Northumbria University Newcastle | Nottingham | Nottingham Trent | Open | Oxford | Oxford Brookes | Plymouth | Portsmouth | Queen Mary | Queen Margaret | Queen's Belfast | Ravensbourne | Reading | Regent's | Robert Gordon | Roehampton | Royal Central School of Speech & Drama | Royal Holloway | Royal Veterinary College | SOAS | Salford | Sheffield | Sheffield Hallam | Southampton | Solent | South Wales | Staffordshire | Stirling | Strathclyde | St Andrews | Sunderland | Surrey | Sussex | Swansea | Teesside | University of the Arts London | University College London | Ulster | Warwick | Wellcome Sanger Institute | Westminster | West of England | West of Scotland | Winchester | Wolverhampton | Worcester | Wrexham Glyndŵr | York | York St John | (131)



## INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

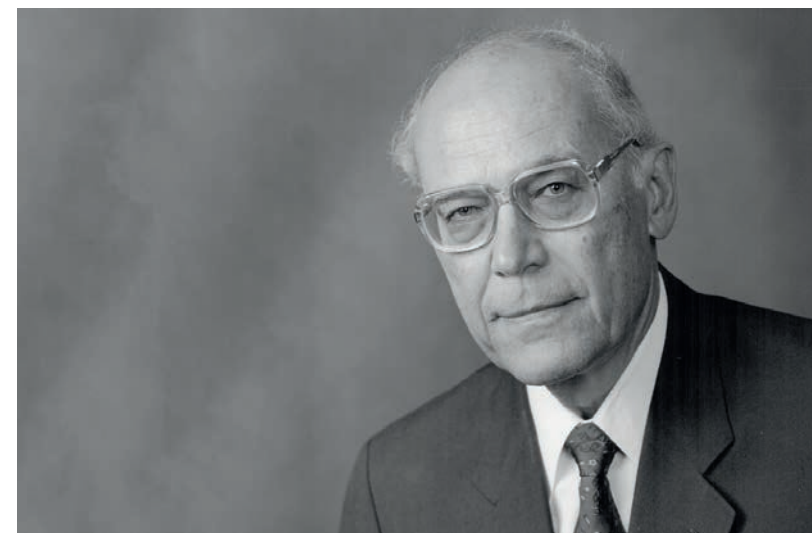
Cara works with a wide range of like-minded international partners, including in particular its two US counterparts, the Scholars at Risk Network (SAR) and the Institute of International Education's Scholar Rescue Fund (SRF). Although the organisations are quite separate, Cara is in regular touch with both SAR and SRF, and funds and supports placements jointly in the UK and elsewhere. In 2021/22 Cara also continued its engagement with the *Philipp Schwartz Initiative* (PSI), run by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation with support from the German Foreign Ministry and a number of German foundations, which helps at-risk academics to find places at German universities. So far, Cara has supported 53 successful PSI applications, and looks forward to working with the Humboldt Foundation on the 12th round in autumn 2022. Several Cara Fellows and SP participants have been successful in winning PSI-funded places.

In 2021/22 Cara's Fellowship Programme further developed its partnership with the Open Society University Network (OSUN) and its Threatened Scholars Initiative, with a growing number of scholars now being supported, with Cara's assistance, at OSUN partner universities in the UK.

We are grateful also to Elsevier for supporting the Syria Programme (SP) with 22 pro bono ScienceDirect licences for SP participants, and to the International Journal of Educational Research Open (IJEDRO) for providing 12 publication fee waivers.

In the course of 2021/22 Cara worked closely with Scholars at Risk Europe (based at Maynooth University, Ireland) and EU colleagues on an application to the European Commission for funding for the second phase of the EU's 'Inspireurope' programme, which supports at-risk academics in Europe as one of the EU's Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA). We had originally hoped to be involved in the first phase, from 2019 to 2022, but our partners' concerns then about the possible implications of Brexit for the joint bid meant that, in the end, we felt we should withdraw. This time around, we got involved on the basis that the UK was intending to be associated with Horizon Europe, the overall umbrella for this and other MSCA programmes. Although it now seems almost certain that the UK will not after all be able to join Horizon Europe for the time being, we applied for and received a funding guarantee letter from UKRI and, on the strength of that, the 'Inspireurope+' bid went ahead and was successful, with Cara as an 'Associate Partner'. We will lead Work Package 2, 'Guidance for Researchers at Risk', and, following the launch in September 2022, we are very much looking forward to the next three years. One of our two Senior Fellowship Programme Officers, Lucia Simms, has stepped up to take the day-to-day lead as Deputy Programme Manager, working with our Director.

## A TRIBUTE TO SIR JOSEPH HOTUNG



Everyone at Cara was deeply saddened to hear of Sir Joseph's death, in December 2021. Through his Charitable Settlement he had been a generous supporter of Cara's work over many years, and the funds that Cara received went to support a growing number of Cara Fellows, from many different countries. He met a group of them for a discussion at Cara's offices at LSBU in July 2017, and his charity went on to support many more in the following years, with increasingly generous grants.

Despite his many other commitments, he still found time to attend Cara functions whenever he could, and frequently responded to invitations, whether to accept or to decline, with a personal phone call and a brief chat. We were glad to be able to learn more about him from his family and colleagues at the celebration of his life at the British Museum in early September 2022, and we shall all miss him very much. A final generous donation from the Charitable Settlement will help us to support more Fellows in the next two years.

## FUNDRAISING

Cara has to raise new funds every year to be able to continue its work; but 2021/22 was exceptional, and so was the response. Most of our new Network members signed up to pay voluntary annual subscriptions, and many of those already paying increased their contributions. As a result, our 'regular' subscription income went from around £320,000 in 2020/21 to over £440,000 in 2021/22, with several universities generously adding one-off 'subscription top-ups' totalling £120,000 as well, to help with our crisis-related staffing and other admin costs. Others separately gave substantial additional amounts to support Fellowships. We are very grateful to them all for their partnership and support.

Individual donations also grew well. Our '10 x 20' fundraising initiative, launched in November 2017 and aimed, ultimately, at getting 10% of those working in higher education in the UK to contribute £20 per year, is continuing to grow. By 31 July 2022 the number of Direct Debit subscribers was over 300, between them pledging around £45,000 per year, including Gift Aid. We also received many generous one-off donations.

In the course of 2021/22 Cara continued to submit funding applications to a wide range of existing and potential institutional supporters; most were successful. Some donors prefer to remain anonymous, but those who are happy to be acknowledged are shown below:

- April Trust
- Central European University (on behalf of Open Society University Network)
- Dowager Countess Eleanor Peel Trust
- Eddie Dinshaw Foundation
- Fondation Liber
- French Huguenot Church of London Charitable Trust
- Garfield Weston Foundation
- Harbour Foundation
- Koninklijke Brill NV
- Mellon Foundation
- Microbiology Society
- Microsoft
- Northern Consortium
- Open Society Foundations
- Paragon Trust
- Robert A Granieri
- Sir Hans Krebs Trust
- Sir Joseph Hotung Charitable Settlement
- Society for Applied Microbiology
- Springer Nature Limited
- Texel Foundation
- Thriplow Charitable Trust
- Wellcome Trust
- Whitaker Charitable Trust
- Wolfson Foundation
- Worshipful Company of World Traders

## FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE – 2021

Cara's Financial Year is the calendar year, and extracts from the audited 2021 Accounts – the Summary Income and Expenditure Account and the Balance Sheet – are on the following pages.

In 2021 most universities continued to pay the funds they were providing for accommodation and living costs for the Cara Fellows they were hosting as restricted donations to Cara, rather than paying the Fellows direct. As a result, Cara's income in 2021 totalled £3,083,608 while expenditure and commitments on awards and programme and project work for the year amounted to £2,705,307. The total net movement of funds was a surplus of £416,673 (2020: a surplus of £296,759). On a cash basis there was a surplus of £448,411 (2020: a deficit of £241,560).

During 2021, the total value of the assets held by Cara's investment advisers, Investec, rose from £343,462 to £383,263.

*“When I contacted Cara, they were amazing. They understood the critical situation. An academic coming from a war zone is not a regular situation. You need mental support; an understanding of the pain and the suffering. I cannot thank them enough for what they have done for me”.*

**Cara Fellow from Syria**

## SUMMARY INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

For the year ended 31st December 2021

	2021 £	2020 £
<b>Income</b>		
Donations and legacies	3,078,772	2,659,453
Investment income	4,836	6,396
Realised gains / (losses) on investments	545	(590)
Unrealised gains / (losses) on investments	37,827	12,441
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Total income</b>	<b>3,121,980</b>	<b>2,677,700</b>
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Raising funds	48,947	4,585
Charitable activities:		
Grants payable	2,081,652	1,849,563
Programme and project work	559,397	512,632
Governance	15,311	14,161
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>2,705,307</b>	<b>2,380,941</b>
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Net income (expenditure) for the year</b>	<b>416,673</b>	<b>296,759</b>
	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

All of the operations undertaken by the company during the current and preceding years are continuing operations.

The retained net surplus for the year based on historical cost is £378,846 (2020 – net surplus £284,318).

Auditor's opinion: We confirm that the information given in the summary income and expenditure account and the balance sheet shown on pages 50 to 51 is consistent with the annual accounts of the company for the year ended 31 December 2021 which have been audited by ourselves.

DAVID WARREN BA FCA (Senior Statutory Auditor), 25 July 2022  
For and on behalf of COCKE, VELLACOTT & HILL  
Chartered Accountants and Statutory Auditor  
Unit 28 City Business Centre, Lower Road, LONDON SE16 2XB

## BALANCE SHEET

as at 31st December 2021

	2021 £	2020 £
<b>Fixed assets</b>		
Tangible assets	10,631	569
Investments	383,263	343,462
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Total fixed assets</b>	<b>393,894</b>	<b>344,031</b>
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Current assets</b>		
Debtors	142,888	109,399
Cash at bank and in hand	1,935,156	1,486,746
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Total current assets</b>	<b>2,078,044</b>	<b>1,596,145</b>
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	(975,698)	(860,609)
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Net current assets (liabilities)</b>	<b>1,102,346</b>	<b>735,536</b>
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>	<b>1,496,240</b>	<b>1,079,567</b>
	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
The funds of the charity:		
Restricted Income Funds	1,114,301	753,213
Unrestricted Funds - general	256,152	288,394
Unrestricted Funds - revaluation reserve	125,787	37,960
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Total charity funds</b>	<b>1,496,240</b>	<b>1,079,567</b>
	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on 28 June 2022 and signed on its behalf by:  
PROF MICHAEL WORTON (Trustee)  
DAVID URE (Trustee)

Company Registration No: 00641687 Charity Registration No: 207471

## GOVERNANCE AND STAFF

### President

Professor Sir Malcolm Grant CBE

### Patrons

Mr Greg Dyke

Rabbi Baroness Neuberger DBE

The Baroness O'Neill of Bengarve CH CBE FBA

Professor Lord Patel of Bradford OBE

Mr Jon Snow

Dr Rowan Williams (The Rt Revd and Rt Hon The Lord Williams of Oystermouth PC)

### Trustees at 31 July 2022

Chair: **Professor Michael Worton CBE**, Former Vice-Provost (International), UCL

Hon Secretary: **Professor Alan McCarthy**, Emeritus Professor of Microbiology,  
University of Liverpool

Hon Treasurer: **Mr David Ure**, Company Director, formerly Chair of the Reuters Foundation

**Ms Nicola Dandridge CBE**, former Chief Executive, Office for Students

**Professor Vince Emery**, President at the University of Hertfordshire hosted by  
Global Academic Foundation, Egypt

**Professor Colin Grant**, Vice-Principal (International), Queen Mary University of London

**Professor Mark Hammond**, Visiting Professor in Public Administration at Canterbury  
Christ Church University.

**Ms Lilia Jolibois**, Non-executive Director and Member of the Audit Committee of  
Futuren Group SA, France, and Board Director of the INSEAD Foundation

**Mrs Anne Lonsdale CBE**, Former President, New Hall (now Murray-Edwards College),  
Cambridge, and Cambridge University Pro-Vice-Chancellor

**Dr Joanna Newman MBE**, Secretary General, Association of Commonwealth Universities

**Dr Cornelia Sorabji CBE**, Counsellor Strategy & External Expertise at the Foreign,  
Commonwealth and Development Office

**Ms Vivienne Stern MBE**, Director of Universities UK International

**Professor Paul Weindling**, Research Professor, History of Medicine, Oxford  
Brookes University

### Staff at 31 July 2022

Executive Director – Stephen Wordsworth CMG LVO

Deputy Director & Fellowship Programme Manager – Zeid Al-Bayat

Deputy Fellowship Programme Manager and Team Leader for new Fellows – Sheila Mills

Deputy Fellowship Programme Manager and Team Leader for active Fellows – Laura Puiggali

Senior Fellowship Programme Officer – Narmin Ali

Senior Fellowship Programme Officer – Lucia Simms

Fellowship Programme Officer – Sara Bermudez

Fellowship Programme Officer – Amanda Gamage

Fellowship Programme Officer – Sinan Özyürek

Fellowship Programme Assistant – Alex Purser

Fellowship Programme Assistant – Tim Riches

Cara Scotland Manager (based in Edinburgh) – Tessa Bell

Middle East Adviser – Kate Robertson

Syria Programme Officer – Anaïs Richmond

Syria Programme Officer – Angus Tait

Syria Programme Administrator – Jake Coulter

Syria Programme Administrator – Sophia Povey

Syria Programme, A&H Coordinator and Finances – Ipek Velioglu Melis

### Volunteers and Interns

We thank our long-term volunteer, Harbinda Hanspal, for her continuing support.

### Data Protection

In view of the sensitivity of the personal information that Cara processes, Cara is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). Cara's registration may be viewed at: <https://ico.org.uk/ESDWebPages/Entry/ZAO66134>



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# cara | '10 x 20'

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Some 400,000 people work in Higher Education in the UK, and more in the UK's learned societies. If 10% of them were able to give just £20 to Cara every year – £5 per quarter – our finances would be transformed.

Council for At-Risk Academics, Registered Charity No 207471

Cara (Council for At-Risk Academics)  
LSBU Technopark  
90 London Road  
SE1 6LN

T: 020 7021 0880

[info@cara.ngo](mailto:info@cara.ngo)  
<https://www.cara.ngo/>

Charity registered in England and Wales No 207471  
Company registered in England and Wales No 641687

Middle East Office (since 2008): 6 Al-Baouneyah Street, Amman, Jordan