

# ACS supports displaced Ukrainian and other chemistry practitioners

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According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 82.4 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced at the end of 2020. Since then, we have seen an exodus of people from Afghanistan and Ukraine. Scientists, including chemistry practitioners, are among those displaced because of conflict, persecution, or human rights violations. The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Mathematics (NASEM) estimates that 20,000 scientists have fled Ukraine during the war with Russia and that the majority are women; most men remain to protect their country.

The American Chemical Society's Science & Human Rights web page states that ACS "has experience working internationally on cases where the rights and welfare of professionally engaged chemistry related practitioners are threatened. Our efforts are informed by protections afforded by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and are directed towards human rights and scientific mobility abridgments and issues where ACS is uniquely positioned and qualified to impact cases in a meaningful way."

ACS has worked with several organizations to carry out this commitment. In the case of Ukraine, the Institute of International Education's Scholar Rescue Fund (IIE-SRF), the Scholars at Risk Network (SAR), and NASEM have created ways to support displaced scholars. ACS is stepping up to support their efforts. NASEM has voiced its backing for Ukraine's scientists, engineers, and health-care workers and has launched the Safe Passage Fund to assist fleeing Ukrainian scholars and their families through the Polish Academy of Sciences. The Safe Passage Fund is funding the cost of administering these efforts, so all donations will go toward grants that will allow Ukrainian scholars to continue their

research. Under an agreement with the Ukrainian and Polish academies of sciences, the NASEM support for scientists and their families will include providing the displaced researchers with grants and placements in appropriate research institutions for up to 6 months.

The ACS Board of Directors has approved a \$500,000 contribution to NASEM's Safe Passage Fund, which



will be prioritized for chemical scientists. In place of a stand-alone effort to support chemical scientists in Ukraine, this approach leverages the relationships and infrastructure already established for the Safe Passage Fund. Vaughan Turekian, executive director of the NASEM Policy and Global Affairs Division, confirmed that having ACS funds focused first on chemical scientists would not be a problem. ACS will also establish a clearinghouse within the ACS International Center website to connect displaced Ukrainian chemical scientists with possible landing spots in the US.

IIE-SRF and SAR actively receive applications from displaced scholars and arrange funded and temporary academic positions at universities until conditions improve for them to return or secure work in their host countries. Since 2021, IIE-SRF has awarded emergency fellowships to 40 scholars from Afghanistan and will continue to support them. IIE-SRF recently launched a call for applications from Ukrainian and Russian professors facing threats. According to IIE-SRF director James Robin King, "Every year since 2017, we have received a record number of requests for help. In Afghanistan and Ukraine, we have witnessed how conflict and political crisis can quickly lead to both a humanitarian crisis and a

higher education emergency. IIE-SRF is working closely with our global network of partners to help displaced scholars from Afghanistan, Ukraine, and globally to continue their scholarly work in safety."

Similarly, SAR has opened applications for Afghan scholars as well as Ukrainian scholars. "This is a community effort—from the president to the provost, to the faculty, students, and staff. SAR fulfills its mission by working with these

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communities at over 600 network organizations. When our collective values are centered on higher education serving the common good, this global coalition is ready to assist when communities of knowledge are under threat," says Chelsea Blackburn Cohen, SAR acting director of membership and university relations.

Through its vast membership and network, ACS has sought to help SAR and IIE-SRF scholars with chemistry-related backgrounds find host institutions for their fellowships. In addition to the contribution to the Safe Passage Fund, ACS is launching a pilot program intended to provide further assistance to displaced scholars. By collaborating with these organizations, ACS will identify scholars to provide access to ACS products, programs, and services, including membership. ACS hopes these services will help the chemistry practitioners be successful in their new locations.

ACS members can also get involved in efforts to support displaced scholars:

- ▶ Plan a presentation for your institution on displaced scholars.
- ▶ Refer a scholar or donate to SAR, IIE-SRF, or NASEM.
- ▶ Host a displaced scholar for a yearlong academic appointment.

If you wish to learn more about how to get involved or have any questions, you can email us at [intlacts@acs.org](mailto:intlacts@acs.org).

Views expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of C&EN or ACS.