

ACADEMIC FREEDOM IN AFRICA

Revisiting the Kampala Declaration

CONFERENCE CALL FOR PAPERS

Venue: University of Dar es Salaam, Dar es Salam, Tanzania

Date: 29 April – 2 May 2025

Concept Note

In November 1990, CODESRIA organised a landmark conference in Kampala, Uganda, where the [Kampala Declaration](#) on Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility was adopted. Coming just a few months after the [Dar es Salaam Declaration](#) on Academic Freedom and Social Responsibility of Academics, the Kampala Declaration provides a broad pan-African framework for the protection of intellectual and academic freedom on the continent. The Dar es Salaam and Kampala declarations were historic responses to new trends in society in general but specifically in the higher education sector.

The failure of 'developmentalism', the imposition of Structural Adjustment Programmes and the consequences thereof in the education sector in the 1980s, and the subsequent onset of neoliberal practices in higher education, promoted a deprofessionalisation of academic practices. This, in turn, catalysed the enactment of the declarations. Thirty-five years later, shifts have occurred in the intellectual realm globally. In Africa, these have been driven largely by a neoliberal agenda that most significantly has reorganised the conditions of academic labour and significantly reshaped how academic and intellectual freedoms are understood and monitored. This has consequently attenuated the role of higher education in anchoring popular struggles for public benefit.

Many have recently identified a discernible decline in the protection of academic and intellectual freedoms across the continent. We are witnessing once again an unprecedented proliferation of new threats and, in the space of higher education in particular, active subversion of academic freedom and institutional autonomy both by the state and by academics themselves.

Most of these new threats emanate from the deepening of neoliberal cultures in society and the institutions, driven, in part, by a worsening economic crisis that has eroded the material conditions of intellectuals, including university workers and students. Furthermore, recent evidence shows a decline in the protection of academic and intellectual freedom in regions once known for upholding these principles, highlighting the urgent need for a renewed drive to safeguard these freedoms on the continent as part of our contribution to their global preservation.

In addition, higher education in Africa has transformed immensely since the 1990s. New private institutions, with new intellectual and academic cultures, have been established and grown in number. There have been reconfigurations in university governance structures and their relation to the state and society; major curriculum reform, including shifts in the modes of delivery; evolving student and faculty demographics; an expanding influence of new technologies in university management; shifts in associational life that affect various issues in the university including, most importantly, student welfare and organising; expanding demands on university infrastructure that affect the learning environment while also intensifying gendered effects and affecting minority groups and persons living with disabilities; and the erosion of the resource base of the university in a neoliberal context that treats education as a private investment only valuable if it yields returns.

Equally significant is the trend towards internationalisation in the African university, marked by the growing influence of external players within the academy and the seductive participation in various rankings that confer different forms of visibility and legitimacy to university managers but without necessarily deepening the intellectual cultures.

These developments, including those associated with a Covid-19 dynamic, demand a fresh review of higher education dynamics in Africa and a reinforcement of the guardrails for intellectual and academic freedom. Revisiting existing instruments for the protection of intellectual freedom, such as the Kampala Declaration, assessing their efficacy and establishing new mechanisms to monitor the status of these freedoms in Africa is important.

A preliminary [review](#) of the Dar es Salaam and Kampala declarations, for instance, concluded that there is a need to 're-popularise the two declarations as instruments of relevance to the contemporary struggles over academic freedom that affect the African intelligentsia today'. In this review, specific attention was paid to gaps that have emerged from weaknesses in the original draft of the declarations as well as from more recent developments in the sector. These gaps call for a rethinking and revision of the declarations, not only regarding the higher education sector but also in relation to how the state and economy function to frame and reframe the question of academic and intellectual freedom today.

The Council plans to convene a conference on academic and intellectual freedom in Africa in 2025, with the review of the Kampala Declaration as an entry point. The conference will seek to reconceptualise the idea of academic and intellectual freedom as a human right underpinned by social justice imperatives. It will mobilise thinking that situates academic and intellectual freedom within the broad societal context, emphasising academia's key role in achieving a transformative and developmental mandate. This commitment to a transformative agenda will reaffirm the dual mandate of the declaration, which highlights both the rights and responsibilities of the intellectual.

It is anticipated that the conference, along with its outcome documents and commitments, will create a platform for a continental framework that provides a shared set of values, guidelines and priorities for achieving, securing and preserving academic and intellectual freedom. This common framing is particularly important within the African continent, which has significantly lagged in achieving individual freedoms and institutional autonomy amid a global context of declining freedoms.

It is not lost on the Council that the conference is convened at a time when, globally, there is growing demand for decolonising/decolonial knowledge; where

the persisting tension between divergent notions of knowledge and knowing has encouraged interest in indigenous and endogenous knowledge; and where a shrinking resource base does not prioritise the link of research to development.

Indeed, the knowledge production sector in Africa is grappling with issues of inclusivity and exclusion, significant questions about the place of indigenous science, of local knowledge workers and bearers whose interventions are excluded from the academy on technicalities, and who therefore cannot enjoy the intellectual freedom conferred to only those in the ivory tower. Are indigenous knowledge institutions spaces worthy of the protections of institutional autonomy? All these are important issues for the conference to reflect upon.

The conference aims bring to together key actors in the African higher education sector to reflect on a range of thematic issues linked to academic/intellectual freedom. It will also provide a platform for networking various actors and shape the Council's perspectives in this area. The key themes include, but are not restricted to, the following: -

1. Academic or Intellectual Freedom?
2. Rethinking Academic Freedom in Africa in the Context of Multipolarity
 - a) Academic freedom: then and now
 - b) Academic freedom and university governance
 - i. The role of students in university governance
 - ii. The role of academic staff in university governance
 - iii. The role of faculty in university governance
 - c) Academic freedom: a decade after the African Higher Education Summit
 - d) University autonomy and accountability
3. The State and Academic/Intellectual Freedoms
4. Higher Education and Academic Freedom
 - a) The transformation imperative?
 - b) Privatisation of higher education
 - c) Changing demographics and associational life in the university
 - d) A civil society agenda for African higher education
 - e) The student movement and academic freedom

5. The University in a Neoliberal Context
 - a) The question of intellectual labour and staff unionisation
 - b) The student as client / commodification of education / knowledge
 - c) The academy and neomanagerialism,
 - d) Institutional and academic integrity and the responsibility of the intellectual
 - e) The African government, STEM or SSH: a sterile debate?
6. Intellectual and Academic Freedom in a New Technological Context
 - a) AI and intellectual responsibility
 - b) ICT, curriculum reform and new modes of delivery
7. Academic Freedom: The Diversity and Inclusion Question
 - a) Breaking the glass ceiling
 - b) Gender and sexuality
 - c) University and the disability question
 - d) Sociocultural, religious and ethnic considerations in academia
8. Resourcing the African University
 - a) Internal dynamics of resource allocation
 - b) The donor / funder as a stakeholder?
 - c) The cost-sharing imperative
 - d) Intersecting interests in financing higher education
9. Intellectual Freedom: a Pan-African Agenda?
 - a) Mainstreaming African epistemologies, ontologies and methodologies
 - b) Dilemmas of publishing in Africa as issues of intellectual freedom
 - c) The academic, professional growth and publishing
 - d) Intellectual freedom and universal struggles for social justice
10. Indigenous Knowledge Systems in a Decolonial Moment

CODESRIA invites applicants to submit papers on any of the above themes for consideration in the conference programme. The conference will take place from **29 April to 2 May 2025 at the University of Dar es Salaam, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.**

Persons interested in submitting complete papers to be presented at the conference are invited to submit them not later than **10 January 2025**. Authors of accepted papers will be notified by **28 February 2025**. All submitted papers should be between 5,000 and 7,000 words in length (including the abstract and references), using CODESRIA's author's guide ([CODESRIA Guide for Authors – CODESRIA](#)).

Papers should be submitted through the CODESRIA website using the following link <https://submission.codesria.org>. **Papers submitted after the deadline or those that exceed the word limit will not be considered.** The Council will fully support authors of invited papers with a return economy class ticket, accommodation and a modest per diem. Further details on this will be provided to successful applicants.

Inquiries may be sent to the CODESRIA Secretariat at tgf@codesria.org