



# GSOC-UAW LOCAL 2110

## MAKING A BETTER NYU SINCE 1998

The Union for Graduate Employees at New York University

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This week, Matthew Hedges, a British citizen arrested by UAE authorities on charges of espionage while conducting research for his Ph.D. dissertation, was [sentenced](#) to life in prison. No evidence was produced by the prosecution, and the hearing took place in five minutes without the presence of a lawyer for the defence. The case amplifies already serious concerns about the dangers of conducting academic work in the UAE, including at the NYU campus in Abu Dhabi.

While the world's attention has been focused on the killing of Jamal Khashoggi, Emirati activists and academics have been subjected to an increasingly harsh crackdown. Earlier this year, activist Ahmed Mansoor was [sentenced](#) to a ten-year term for social media posts about human rights violations, while in 2017 academic Nasser bin Ghaith was [handed](#) a ten-year sentence for criticizing Egyptian authorities. Even something as mundane as showing sympathy for Qatar on social media has been officially [classified](#) as a cybercrime. Indeed, the UAE has emerged as one of the strongest backers of the Saudi regime after the Khashoggi affair. NYU [trustee](#) and Emirati official Khaldoon al Mubarak, for instance, [attended](#) the “Davos in the Desert” event in Saudi Arabia that was famously [shunned](#) by many invitees.

Just last week, the Board of the Middle Eastern Studies Association (MESA) issued a “[Press Release on Deteriorating Security Conditions for Researchers in the United Arab Emirates](#),” which stated that, “In recent months, it has become obvious that there has been an escalation in insecurity for researchers. Gone are the days when one could simply arrive in the UAE and start asking questions; doing so in the current climate means taking enormous risks that could endanger scholars, students, and interlocutors.”

With its deep connections to the Emirati state, the university is particularly complicit in a crackdown which has directly affected members of the NYU community. To cite just a few examples, last year NYU professors Mohamad Bazzi and Arang Keshavarzian were [denied](#) visas to the UAE, which inhibited their research and prevented them from teaching. And in 2016, Kristina Bogos, who as an NYU undergraduate had organized around issues of workers' rights during the construction of the NYUAD campus, had her email account [hacked](#) by state authorities and was denied a student visa to study at Georgetown Qatar.

Such cases make it impossible to undertake the kind of local scholarly engagement that NYUAD purports to encourage. And as Emirati forces engage in an increasingly devastating war in Yemen and lend direct support to authoritarian crackdowns in places like Egypt, the silence of NYU materially contributes to the quashing of domestic dissent that enables these devastating foreign adventures.

Given that the NYU name has been officially [invoked](#) by the Emirati regime in its propaganda and lobbying campaigns, that it has partnered with the state in an a [wide array](#) of projects including a [controversial](#) cyber security center, and that it is officially partnered with, and partly [managed](#) by, an Emirati state agency, the university should protest the use of the NYU brand to whitewash the increasingly autocratic actions of the Emirati state.

The NYU administration responded to the Bazzi and Keshavarzian case with a tepid “[Exchange of Letters](#)” and a promise to study the freedom of movement across campuses. Such measures are insufficient. GSOC condemns the conviction of Matthew Hedges, and calls on NYU to forcefully advocate for principles of academic freedom, free speech, and freedom of movement, whether in the United States or the United Arab Emirates.

In Solidarity,

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