

the discoveries (see page 573). But some also expressed disappointment that Egypt's government will be restricting access – at least for now – to researchers at Egyptian institutions. There will be no open calls for research proposals of the type that museums and funding agencies typically publish to attract the best ideas and expertise.

The government has justifiable reasons for being careful about permitting further international involvement in its heritage. During colonial times, some of Egypt's most precious artefacts were taken, and many have wound up in Europe's leading museums.

The last time that coffins and mummies were discovered on a large scale was in 1891, at Bab el-Gasus ('the door of the priests'), not far from Luxor. Some of the surviving coffins from that find are now at the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden in Leiden in the Netherlands, and at the Vatican. Moreover, Zahi Hawass, Egypt's former antiquities minister, has long called for the return of the Rosetta Stone, which has been at the British Museum in London for more than 200 years.

But today's Egyptology bears little relation to the field's earlier era. Egypt hosts hundreds of teams of archaeologists from museums and universities around the world who are working in partnership with Egypt's universities and government. At last month's congress for Egyptologists, both Hawass and El-Enany were among the main speakers.

There are also many models for research collaboration. Egypt could, for example, issue calls for proposals in which international researchers are invited to join Egypt-led research consortia as co-investigators.

Every nation is the custodian of its heritage – a right that must never again be taken away. But at the same time, Egypt's rich history, which encompasses many civilizations, is also an example of how science and scholarship flourish when there are few barriers to talent. That is why, when Egypt feels the time is right, its government should consider inviting more of the world's researchers to work with its own, allowing them to contribute to the latest finds from the country's fascinating past.

Troubling trends

Attacks on scholars are on the rise at the same time as universities in several countries find themselves at the centre of student protests.

"Sowing corruption on Earth". That was one of the charges levelled at Iranian conservation biologists who were arrested in January 2018 and charged with spying. They were arrested for using camera traps to study endangered wildlife, especially the Asiatic cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus venaticus*). There are fewer than 100 of the animals left in the world and most are believed to be in Iran.

All the nine researchers charged – Niloufar Bayani,

Taher Ghadirian, Amirhossein Khaleghi Hamidi, Houman Jowkar, Sepideh Kashani, Abdolreza Kouhpayeh, Sam Rajabi, Morad Tahbaz and Kavous Seyed Emami – were associated with the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation, a well-known Tehran-based wildlife conservation charity that had strong links to international conservation organizations and to the UN Environment Programme.

Emami died in unexplained circumstances in prison shortly after his arrest. The other eight were sentenced last week to between 6 and 10 years in prison, but are strongly protesting their innocence. The trial was held in secret, despite an international outcry from leading conservation charities and pleas from the United Nations for a fair and transparent process.

This tragic verdict came too late for inclusion in *Free to Think 2019*, an annual report from Scholars at Risk, an international organization that highlights human-rights violations against academic researchers and students. Now in its fifth year, the report records the experiences of scholars who have been subjected to violent or fatal attacks, wrongful prosecution or imprisonment, or who have been sacked or expelled from their institution without undergoing due process.

It isn't only in Iran that the law is being misused in such a way. The Scholars at Risk report highlights cases of rights violations in 56 countries. This year's tally of 324 recorded cases between 1 September 2018 and 31 August 2019 is higher than last year's 294, although the report points out that the examples are just a snapshot of a larger picture.

And there is another emerging phenomenon that has come too late to be highlighted in this year's study, but is likely to appear in the next. This is the scenes of campus unrest in such diverse locations as Chile, Hong Kong, Iran, Iraq and Lebanon.

Night after night, thousands of young people, as well as their teachers and lecturers, are taking to the streets or – in Hong Kong's case – have been protesting inside university campuses. Campuses are often places for dissent, but what is happening now is on a scale rarely seen in recent times.

These protests are often in response to a lack of jobs, rising prices, falling living standards, environmental concerns, or concerns about weak, unrepresentative or corrupt political leadership.

The response from university leadership depends on the context. In Iran's case, speaking out is not an option. In Lebanon, where there is much more academic freedom, students and lecturers have organized informal teach-ins and university presidents are calling on political leaders to heed their students' demands.

As 2019 gives way to 2020, it is unlikely that campus unrest will abate. There will be pressure from governments on university management not to allow premises to be used for demonstrations. And there will be pressure from the academic community and students not to give in to these, and more draconian, demands.

Researchers and students should not need to live in fear in the pursuit of their science. As this year's Scholars at Risk report demonstrates, that more are having to do so is a troubling trend.

“Science and scholarship flourish when there are few barriers to talent.”