Sociologist Dr. Azat Gündo˘gan was forced to flee his home country of Turkey overnight. “It was a now-or-never type of decision,” he explains. “We packed overnight. We couldn’t sleep. We were terrified.”

With support from IIE-SRF, he was able to join Cornell University’s Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies and the Cornell Institute for European Studies.

Dr. Laura Spitz, Cornell’s former Vice Provost for International Affairs, explains the university’s decision to host Gündo˘gan. “Academically and morally, it was the right thing to do,” she says. “First, these are incredibly smart folks, and we benefit from having them in our academic community. Second, our scholars have all taught a course within their respective fields and have connected particularly well in seminars for undergraduates pursuing advanced study within their major. Third, all have been active in outreach efforts on campus, within the local community, and at talks and conferences around the country about scholars at risk globally, challenging political situations in their home countries, and the importance of academic freedom and free speech. Finally, but perhaps most importantly, they have contributed to our community as neighbors, friends, and colleagues, and that is primarily how we engage with them, rather than as IIE-SRF fellows per se.

IIE-SRF fellows are our colleagues in a globalized academy; we attend the same conferences, submit to the same journals, and contribute to knowledge creation that knows no physical or political boundaries. They share our ambitious research goals, are passionate teachers, and rely on an environment where they can pursue their work and express themselves without fear of repercussion. Given the nature of the globalized academy, those of us who live in places and work in institutions that support academic freedom have an obligation to extend a hand to those whose livelihoods, reputations, and well-being are put under threat. In addition, hosting IIE-SRF scholars has been an extremely rewarding and unifying endeavor for our scholarly community. We feel so fortunate to have IIE-SRF scholars here, and they quickly have become cherished friends and colleagues.