

COLLEAGUES IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

A Host's View: Cornell University

Excerpts from an Interview with Jason Hecht, Cornell University

Dr. Jason Hecht is the former Associate Director for Academic Programming of Cornell University's Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies. With Hecht's support, Cornell has hosted seven IIE-SRF fellows from six countries to date. In this interview with IIE-SRF, he notes that the collaboration has the enthusiastic support of faculty and administrators.

Cornell's partnership with IIE-SRF dates back to the early 2000s, and given a political climate that in many places around the world threatens scholars' freedom of expression, we believe that we have a commitment as an institution, both academically and morally, to contribute to efforts protecting scholars who are under threat.

Cornell is a big place, and much of my role entails connecting faculty and students from across the university who share thematic, regional, or methodological interests. On a personal note, my grandparents came to this country as refugees fleeing the Holocaust, so this work has special meaning to me.

The IIE-SRF scholars that we have hosted have made significant contributions to our community of scholars here at Cornell. First and foremost, they are talented researchers whose expertise and perspective add to the vibrancy of our scholarly 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.



IRENE SUMBELE

Cameroon • Medical Parasitology
Cornell University, United States

Dr. Irene Sumbele is pursuing research on the prevention and management of malaria in Cameroon.



Receiving Support and Giving Back

Sociologist Dr. Azat Gündoğan 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 Gündoğan. "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, they bring with them crucial information about where they come from. And third, they enrich us as human beings."¹

At Cornell, Gündoğan was able to make progress on a book about the formation of satellite cities in the Istanbul area. He says he is especially grateful to his colleagues on campus. "My colleagues at Cornell were extremely sensitive to what we were going through," he says. "They were so open and so supportive of me. Upon my arrival to the university, I was able to immediately take part in a dynamic intellectual community. I will never forget that." After his IIE-SRF fellowship, Gündoğan secured a position at Florida State University, where his wife, a historian and IIE-SRF alumna, is also employed.