



**HAL**  
open science

## COMETS OPINION 2018-38 - RESEARCH: A GLOBAL RIGHT

Comité Ethique, Philippe Askenazy, Debré Patrice, Frédérique Leichter-Flack,  
Leduc Michèle, Antoinette Molinié

► **To cite this version:**

Comité Ethique, Philippe Askenazy, Debré Patrice, Frédérique Leichter-Flack, Leduc Michèle, et al..  
COMETS OPINION 2018-38 - RESEARCH: A GLOBAL RIGHT. 2018. hal-02929759

**HAL Id: hal-02929759**

**<https://hal.science/hal-02929759v1>**

Submitted on 3 Sep 2020

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

## OPINION no. 2018-38

---

### ***RESEARCH: A GLOBAL RIGHT***

*Opinion no. 2018-38 approved at the COMETS plenary session of  
18 October 2018*

#### **WORKING GROUP MEMBERS:**

Philippe Askenazy  
Patrice Debré  
Frédérique Leichter-Flack  
Michèle Leduc  
Antoinette Molinié

#### **RAPPORTEUR:**

Antoinette Molinié

**CONTENTS**

<b>I. FORMAL INTERNAL REQUEST</b>	3
<b>II. ANALYSIS</b>	5
A. For safe research conditions	5
1. How can research institutions respond to insecurity?	6
2. How can researchers respond to insecurity?	7
B. For solidarity in research	9
C. For the right to intervene in the name of research	10
Conclusion	13
<b>III. RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	14
A. For safe research conditions	14
B. For solidarity in research	14
C. For the right to intervene in the name of research	15
<b>IV. Glossary of abbreviations or acronyms used</b>	16

## I. FORMAL INTERNAL REQUEST

Scientific research is necessary to address the challenges underlying the conservation and development of global public goods, whether they concern the planet—such as biodiversity and climate; whether they affect humans—such as public health and scientific knowledge; or whether they result from global policies—such as the stability of the global financial system<sup>1</sup>. Scientific research is also a contributing factor to worldwide peace<sup>2</sup>. This is because it is based on exchange and on the values of truth and integrity. Moreover, its universality and neutrality give it a diplomatic dimension, as UNESCO states: “*demonstrating recognition by Member States of the growing value of science and technology for tackling various world problems on a broad international basis, thereby strengthening co-operation among nations as well as promoting the development of individual nations*” and recommends that Member States seek “*to encourage conditions in which scientific researchers [...] have the responsibility and the right [...] to work in a spirit of intellectual freedom to pursue, expound and defend the scientific truth as they see it*”. Research must therefore be able to be carried out freely: obviously according to the relevance of scientific questions but also to the socio-economic context and local capabilities.

However, current conflicts and the new situations they generate endanger research activities. In some countries, research is limited or even prohibited for ideological, religious or political reasons. Some subjects are not allowed to be addressed, research activities are restricted, projects are monitored and the dissemination of conclusions is forbidden, all to a greater or lesser degree of radicalism. In countries where religion has a strong impact on politics, research that does not comply with the official credo is threatened. The place of women in research activities is the subject of daily struggles. Even in democratic countries, certain research activities can be monitored and subject to pressure from lobbies, despite the intervention of opposition forces. Finally, armed conflicts limit the free movement of researchers and put their lives at risk. When a country is in the grip of permanent violence, whether civil war or terror imposed by armed groups of a political or mafia-like nature, research may be restricted and the researcher threatened.

All these situations of coercion call for researchers to be protected. They also raise specific ethical issues for the international scientific community that COMETS intends to address. The issuing of this formal internal request is thus in line with the COMETS Opinion on freedoms and responsibilities in academic research<sup>3</sup>, but now addresses the specific issue of safety and solidarity imposed by research activities in situations where human rights are violated. The solutions to the problems thus posed obviously go far beyond the scope of research institutions. However, we believe that they—and especially the CNRS—have an

---

<sup>1</sup> Charles Kindleberger: “International public goods without international government”, *American Economic Review*, no. 76, 1, 1986.

<sup>2</sup> See Aant Elzinga: “Features of the current science policy regime: Viewed in historical perspective”, *Science and Public Policy*, Volume 39, Issue 4, 1 August 2012, Pages 416 - 428, <https://doi.org/10.1093/scipol/scs046>, published on 6 August 2012.

<sup>3</sup> COMETS Opinion no. 2017-35

important role to play in defending the ethics of science in the international arena in light of the arbitrary nature of non-democratic political systems.

COMETS investigates herein the right of researchers worldwide to carry out research anywhere, free from taboos, hindrance or pressure.

## II. ANALYSIS

This Opinion develops three interrelated questions addressed to both researchers and CNRS officials.

We shall firstly focus on the issue of researchers working in unsafe conditions where insecurity reigns. This has already been mentioned in a previous Opinion<sup>4</sup>. This concerns research investigating regions at war, or countries where the absence of democratic decisions is the rule. Researchers do not have access to all the data needed for their study. They may also be exposed to personal risks and their research be used against their will for unethical projects.

We shall secondly take a stance for solidarity in research. We shall consider the actions that the CNRS can take with regard to researchers who suffer harm in countries that do not respect the rule of law and where research is not exercised in safe conditions. We shall advocate for partnership conditions that could be developed to address this issue.

Finally, we shall seek ways that the CNRS could act in order to establish a strategy for a public research policy appropriate to areas where there is insecurity. The aim here is to foster reflection, along with the other French institutional partners, in order to better understand abuse against research, and possibly to act on the reasons for insecurity and their consequences. We shall discuss herein considerations on the right to intervene in countries where research is threatened through restrictions applied to the subjects covered and/or by the unsafe conditions of researchers, as well as on the resources that could be provided to science diplomacy.

### A. For safe research conditions

First of all, let us note the wide variety of situations in which research is unsafe and researchers unprotected, whether due to the monitoring of activities, the violation of human rights or even violence against researchers. While some governments simply intend to control areas of research through budgetary choices, others—through their failure to respect human rights—threaten the freedom of researchers, for example by prohibiting work related to the theory of evolution, while in war zones such as in the Middle East, archaeologists put their lives at risk. It should be added that the life of a researcher may be threatened not only by the institutional bodies (the police or army) of the country where he or she is studying, but also by violent participants in unofficial conflicts, such as terrorist groups in Africa and the Middle East, or drug cartels in Mexico.

In these different situations of graduated violence, we can distinguish the ethical problems faced by research institutions from those faced by researchers themselves, these two types of difficulty obviously being related.

---

<sup>4</sup> See the previous note.

## 1. How can research institutions respond to insecurity?

In the situations mentioned above, researchers are entitled to demand the protection of the institutions of their country of origin. The obligation of the research institution to secure the work of its staff is subject above all to labour law in the case of contract staff and civil service law in that of civil servants. How can a research institution deal with such situations when they lie outside the scope of official diplomatic relations? Research institutions and embassies should take the necessary but often sensitive measures required to protect their researchers, who often find themselves facing dangers alone. In some disciplines, such as ethnology, there is a constant conflict between researchers' safety and their isolation, which is often a condition of their work.

However, the protection of researchers must not become an obsession with security. Some measures taken by the CNRS may raise questions about research ethics, such as the agreement signed on 30 May 2018 between its management and that of military intelligence<sup>5</sup>. This agreement follows the CNRS's '*appel attentats-recherches*', a call for research on attacks, and is also in line with another mechanism, the '*Pacte Enseignement Supérieur*', which is a pact targeting higher education that was recently initiated by the French Ministry of the Armed Forces. A link between research and military intelligence raises not only ethical but also practical problems, because a study can become very difficult if the context in which it is conducted designates the researcher as the agent of a State or even as a spy. On the other hand, researchers—and in particular archaeologists—can bring their expertise to bear for the police within the framework of France's *Office central de lutte contre le trafic de biens culturels* (OCBC - Central Office for the Fight against Trafficking of Cultural Property)<sup>6</sup>, in order to monitor the illicit sale of artefacts.

In practice, the institution must comply with the regulations and recommendations of positions abroad. However, what should be our attitude when host country rules become insurmountable obstacles to research programmes? What should be the reaction of the institution for which the threatened researcher works? What is the role of a consulate or embassy in protecting a researcher?

Through its '*fonctionnaire de sécurité de défense*' (FSD - Defence and Security Officer)<sup>7</sup>, the CNRS must factor in risk assessments as well as local and regional contexts, and disseminate this information to researchers. The associated department must be vigilant about research conditions, and must surround itself with the means to monitor these conditions in the best possible way. As such, the CNRS's *Direction Europe de la Recherche et Coopération Internationale* (DERCI - European Research and International Cooperation Department) has a central role to play, not only to ensure the safety of its staff but more generally to define a strategy for a public policy suited to areas of insecurity for researchers. To assist it in this delicate task while adding an ethical dimension, we propose the creation

<sup>5</sup> See the contents of this agreement at <http://www.cnrs.fr/fr/cnrsinfo/signature-dune-convention-entre-le-cnrs-et-la-direction-du-renseignement-militaire>.

<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.police-nationale.interieur.gouv.fr/organisation/Direction-Centrale-de-la-Police-Judiciaire/Lutte-contre-la-criminalite-organisee/Office-central-de-lutte-contre-le-traffic-de-biens-culturels>.

<sup>7</sup> See the remit of the Defence and Security Officer at <http://www.dgdr.cnrs.fr/FSD/fsd/missions-fsd.htm>

of a small committee composed of researchers with field experience in the area of safety and security. This committee could also address the issue of banning, and subsequently re-opening, certain study areas for reasons of safety or politics. For example, French archaeologists are the only ones not yet authorised to open excavation sites in southern Iraq. Sites once excavated by French researchers are now being worked by the British<sup>8</sup>. The committee we are advocating would also focus on solving the sometimes critical issues faced by researchers deprived of their fields of study. It would have to decide on the difficult dilemma between two ways of defending national interests: protecting nationals effectively but without excessive paternalism on the one hand, and pursuing research of national and international benefit on the other.

Precise information on real-life situations is thus needed. Programmes on research insecurity, its causes and remedies could be developed by the CNRS with the active involvement of its *Institut des Sciences Humaines et Sociales* (INSHS - Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences).

## 2. How can researchers respond to insecurity?

The situation of researchers with regard to the authorities of countries that do not respect human rights is fraught with contradictions. They must abide by the law even in relation to a regulation they condemn in the country where they are carrying out their activity, yet at the same time they have a duty to denounce the abuses they observe, at the risk of jeopardising the very existence of their work and sometimes even endangering their very lives. What attitude should they adopt when local regulations and practices do not respect human rights? Researchers must obviously follow the rules of the host country. Yet, once they are under surveillance, how can they preserve their autonomy and the safety of their local colleagues? In this situation, their relationships in the field—both with their institution in France and with the team with which they are collaborating abroad—are particularly fragile. This is why a research policy on human rights violations must be as clear as possible, even if diplomacy requires preserving the independence of the countries concerned.

A researcher's mission should include helping to train (doctoral) students in the host country. It would be beneficial if researchers could, in addition to their own discipline, also address the issue of research ethics while taking into consideration the specific nature of the conflictual situation they are having to face. How may this training in research ethics be organised in a more or less policed society? The contribution of French research institutions in this context could be decisive. Perhaps these questions could be addressed and appropriate teaching provided within the framework of the Campus France agency or as part of the '*Jeunes Experts*' (Young Experts) programme of the *Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Etrangères* (MEAE - French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs)?

---

<sup>8</sup> Communication by Cécile Michel, senior researcher at the CNRS, whom we would like to thank for her considerable contribution to this Opinion.



In countries where research is subject to political, economic or police control, access to data poses specific problems. Researchers often have limited access to statistics and/or cartographic data on sensitive topics, particularly in sociology and geography. Pressure may be applied to restrict access to databases. Access by the local population may be controlled, thus considerably reducing the ethnologist's data. Sometimes the disinformation of a researcher is deliberately organised by the country's authorities under the pressure of political, economic or religious interests. Do researchers have a duty—and within what limits—to demand access to such data and to denounce obstacles to their freedom? The institution that mandated them (e.g. the CNRS) may need to help in some cases. This data collection issue concerns not only the study of the contemporary situation but also that of the past and its documentation. In this sense, the opening of archives concerning a country that has been the arena of deadly antagonisms poses specific problems for the historian, not only in relation to the country concerned but also in relation to those that were involved in the conflict. This is the case, for example, of the archives relating to the massacres perpetrated in Rwanda in 1994, which are still the subject of controversy in France today and of documentary restrictions. Once again, public service researchers face an ethical dilemma between respecting (if not defending) the national interest and taking into consideration the point of view of the country hosting them. This dilemma is all the more acute when the host country is often plagued by conflicts of interest which, alone, pose ethical problems for the researcher.

It should be noted that the collection of data, objects and remains (as in ethnology or archaeology) implies a duty not to keep this indigenous heritage<sup>9</sup> and even ethically obliges the researcher to restore this heritage (which can take different forms) in compliance with the international regulations in force<sup>10</sup>.

Furthermore, researchers may be called upon for intelligence and espionage purposes either by the local authorities of an undemocratic country or by their own embassy. It may be difficult for them to preserve their autonomy and remain in the position of neutrality that should in principle be theirs, if only because it is their duty to denounce abuse against themselves and pressure brought to bear on the work of their colleagues. Where, then, do a researcher's ethics lie? Moreover, what ethics should govern public researchers, who have a duty to the State that employs them? Should they try to maintain a neutral position that is sometimes untenable, or make a committed stand on their own underlying values?

---

<sup>9</sup> The definition of heritage property can be found in the 1970 UNESCO Convention, which stipulates that "the term 'cultural property' means property which [...] is specifically designated by each State as being of importance for archaeology, prehistory, history, literature, art or science".

<sup>10</sup> Bénédicte Savoy talks of the "translocation" of heritage assets appropriated at the expense of the weakest party. See her inaugural lecture at the Collège de France in "*Objets du désir, désir d'objets*" [Objects of desire, desire for objects], Paris, 2017, Fayard. On 23 November 2018, French President Emmanuel Macron was given an important report by Bénédicte Savoy and Felwine Sarr on returning African heritage assets to African countries. See the report "*Restituer le patrimoine africain : vers une nouvelle éthique relationnelle*" at <https://bj.ambafrance.org/Telecharger-l-integralite-du-Rapport-Sarr-Savoy-sur-la-restitution-du>.

## B. For solidarity in research

Safe, secure research is not only a matter for our institutions and researchers. It is a major concern in countries that do not respect the rule of law or in war zones where some projects are simply not feasible. Solidarity with the colleagues affected is essential. They must be able to rely not only on the solidarity of other researchers but above all, on the more powerful and theoretically more effective solidarity of French research institutions. How may this solidarity be expressed? This issue is all the more pressing in countries with which France does not officially have any diplomatic relations, such as Syria, currently in the throes of a long war. How can we support our fellow archaeologists in the Middle East who are witnessing massive destruction of their material linked to global trafficking<sup>11</sup>?

A partnership with countries affected by violence first involves an on-site study of their needs. Once the emergencies have been identified, it is necessary to propose remedial solutions. Earmarked doctoral and postdoctoral fellowships appear essential. However, we can also express our solidarity by supporting research that has been restricted and hosting affected researchers, such as those from the United States after the restrictions placed on climate research. The CNRS could hold workshops on the theme of research insecurity with the participation and testimony of researchers directly concerned by problems of repression. Obviously, we cannot avoid the difficulties that these colleagues will encounter when they return to their countries and we must help them to face them.

In addition to the specific answers given to researchers from countries that do not respect the rule of law, it is necessary to highlight the difficulties that many foreign colleagues face in obtaining a French visa and work permit<sup>12</sup>. These major administrative obstacles are most often tackled by the directors of French laboratories, who waste precious time on them. The ministries concerned should work to remove them.

Researchers must stand with the local colleagues with whom they are working. However, in countries where human rights are not respected, the situation of their partners can be a sensitive issue. If researchers take a stance on freedom of research, this collaboration may prejudice to a greater or lesser extent colleagues whose freedom is restricted. Indeed, a police system can impose sanctions of varying degrees of severity on them and sometimes even cause permanent damage to their careers. Religious institutions or lobbies can also intervene in a similar way. The fragility of the freedom of local collaborators is thus an essential factor in the attitude of researchers, who must be extremely attentive to the situation of these local colleagues. Their personal protection also

---

<sup>11</sup> See the testimonial of Cécile Michel, chair of The International Association for Assyriology, on the insecurity surrounding research in the Middle East and the ethical issues raised. Her presentation to COMETS on 25 September 2017 on the subject of research in countries at war and in those that do not respect human rights is available on the COMETS website.

<sup>12</sup> This problem is also that of foreign students, not to mention the problem of financing their studies. The increase in university tuition fees for foreign students from outside Europe is of particular concern. This measure, announced by Prime Minister Edouard Philippe on 19 November 2018, is part of a plan called "Choose France", which is the subject of heated debate.

depends on their attitude, because the position of local collaborators in response to a totalitarian regime cannot be predicted, and it is necessary to consider the possibility of provocations and restrictions on the freedom of researchers in foreign countries.

Indeed, it is sometimes difficult to clearly distinguish local colleagues whose interests are strictly scientific from those who, beyond research, are driven to collaborate with foreign researchers by political motivations. How can we discern in active collaboration the share of mutual scientific interest and that of a political motivation that may remain unacknowledged? We have seen French researchers take charge of students from the university with which they were cooperating abroad, but who turned out to have a policing function. There is a real need for vigilance.

### **C. For the right to intervene in the name of research**

Global public goods know no borders, and neither does research on them. However, many of them (including health, climate and energy) can be the subject of research projects in countries where research is not safe and human rights are violated. Our institutions must allow research activities, both to advance knowledge and for its applications. If a research topic is relevant, it cannot be restricted on the basis of its underlying principles. Its scheduling, content and support must be assessed according to the risk it poses to researchers and their partners or, more simply, to the difficulties they face in carrying it out against a background of violence. Some research can even promote peace in areas where freedom is violated, or at least promote respect for human rights, such as AIDS research in countries where homosexuality is a crime and where certain minorities are stigmatised.

In addition, it should be considered that global public goods include research data as well as collected objects, the conservation and return of which deserve ethical considerations. However, the return and conservation of assets can be particularly complicated in a war situation such as in the Middle East or in the context of a corrupt regime. In some countries, we have seen the work of researchers or archaeological objects taken by authorities not respecting the rule of law, and the destruction of stratigraphical surveys. The situation in the Middle East and particularly in Syria—where over 320 archaeological sites have been looted, damaged or destroyed since the beginning of the war—is of particular concern in this regard. On 12 February 2015, the United Nations adopted Resolution 2199<sup>13</sup>, which condemns the destruction of cultural heritage and the trafficking of antiquities from Iraq and Syria. UNESCO is working with Interpol, customs, museums and major auction houses to prevent stolen objects from being sold. The role of NGOs and associations is of great importance in this respect, and they must support researchers<sup>14</sup>. This is why the International Association for Assyriology (IAA), chaired by

---

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2199%282015%29&referer=/english/&Lang=F](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2199%282015%29&referer=/english/&Lang=F).

<sup>14</sup> NGOs have extensive experience of field dilemmas involving conflicts between the ethics of conviction and the ethics of responsibility, particularly around the issue of testifying. The dilemmas between truth and effectiveness experienced by researchers and humanitarian workers may be similar. They can draw on each other's experiences, particularly with regard to feedback from the field. However, our considerations must factor in the specific nature of the ethical problems of researchers in hostile environments, if only because of

Cécile Michel (also a senior researcher at the CNRS) and gathering together Middle Eastern archaeologists and Assyriologists, published a statement in ten languages on its website in August 2014 to alert populations and governments to the situation. However, unlike our neighbours, Internet sales are not monitored in France. We may wonder how a French research institution such as the CNRS could intervene in such extreme situations<sup>15</sup>. This would be a diplomatic opportunity to intervene in accordance with research ethics.

However, it is questionable whether the ethical questions raised by the researcher's position in a situation of institutional or contextual violence can obtain clear and standardised answers, given the sensitivity of their context, which is subject to subtle variations requiring a diplomatic approach. We shall not address here the very broad question of the relationship between scientific research and diplomacy, which should be the subject of a separate Opinion, but we can consider the responsibilities incumbent upon researchers and the institution that employs them. Taken seriously, these responsibilities and the solidarity they imply can grant both researchers and research institutions a real right of intervention.

The CNRS could thus lead its French, European and international partners to reflect on research programmes focusing on safety and security aspects in addition to the respect of human rights. We could thus explore certain sensitive topics such as birth control, which is a victim of religious ostracism; reluctance to accept vaccination, which is opposed by lobbies; food security in a war context; or climate studies that have fallen prey to climate change scepticism. These questions can in themselves constitute multidisciplinary research themes, involving in particular the humanities.

In a context of insecurity, it is particularly difficult for researchers to clearly separate their research activity from their activism. How can we distinguish our condition as researchers from that of ordinary citizens? Indeed, researchers have a duty to disseminate information based on human rights violations, as in Turkey for example, or on looting and the destruction of heritage, as in Syria. We can consider the researcher as a whistleblower on violence and human rights violations. However, we may wonder where the limit of a researcher's right to intervene lies, not only in terms of personal safety but also of ethics. To what extent can a research institution take responsibility for defending a member of staff who takes personal risks? Can—and indeed should—researchers, in certain extreme situations, commit themselves to defending fundamental freedoms, including those of research? To what extent should the institution mandating them support their commitment? It is clear that there is no definitive answer to questions where context is an essential factor<sup>16</sup>. Nevertheless, it is worth emphasising the ethical and solidarity dimension of research in situations of violence, whether the research focuses on social or environmental issues.

---

the very special relationship that scientific research has with truth (see COMETS Opinion no. 2018-37: "What new responsibilities do researchers have at this time of debate over post-truth?" - April 2018.)

<sup>15</sup> The issues surrounding restitution—in particular of human remains—were examined at the first archaeological ethics symposium held in Paris on 25 and 26 May 2018 (see <https://archeoethique.wixsite.com/colloque>). The results will soon be published in the Canadian Journal of Bioethics.

<sup>16</sup> It is clear that these questions also apply, in comparable terms, to NGOs in the humanitarian sphere of activity. Indeed, the duty to testify to human rights violations jeopardises their ability to act in the field.

Thus, this analysis would invite both the institutions concerned and researchers to reflect on the role of research in peacekeeping and the need to build bridges between science and diplomacy. Indeed, in the proper management of common goods, science diplomacy is now considered an expression of soft power, and research forms an integral part of this sphere-of-influence diplomacy<sup>17</sup>. We are not seeking to make researchers work for the purposes of science diplomacy but to use research as a means of fostering ethical conduct. This is the driving force behind the French "Make our Planet great again" initiative (2017), a programme inviting North American researchers and students to France<sup>18</sup>. Two days after US President Donald Trump announced the withdrawal of the United States from the 2015 Paris Agreement, with all the consequences that this decision implies for climate research, French President Emmanuel Macron invited researchers, students, entrepreneurs and associations to join France in the fight against global warming, involving the CNRS in the new programme's implementation<sup>19</sup>.

In this context of science diplomacy, the CNRS has a very special role to play in terms of solidarity with researchers in difficulty and of its contribution to the advancement of human rights. As far back as the French Revolution, the political role that science can play was a concern of Nicolas de Condorcet's speeches at the Convention. Though sometimes undermined<sup>20</sup>, this humanist concern of French diplomacy remains constant.

Progress has been made in the contribution of scientific research to the restoration or keeping of peace through international scientific cooperation. We are aware of the peace-making role played by CERN, created in 1954, during the Cold War years. Although the SESAME (Synchrotron-light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East) research facility, opened in 2017 in Amman under the auspices of UNESCO, may not become a vector of cooperation, it can at least offer ground for dialogue between partners in conflict. The European Union's setting up in Bucharest of the Extreme Light Infrastructure (ELI) laser can contribute to the European integration of some of the countries in Central Europe that are unfortunately tempted by isolationism. But beyond this, French research has a diplomatic role to play in maintaining peace and promoting human rights, and the CNRS could be the promoter<sup>21</sup>.

---

<sup>17</sup> The diplomatic significance of science can be noted, for example, in Barack Obama's speech in Cairo in 2004, or in the IPCC's report on climate change (2013).

<sup>18</sup> See Pierre-Bruno Ruffini's article "*Un courant gagnant de la diplomatie scientifique de la France*" [A winning orientation for French science diplomacy] *Le Monde*, 14 December 2017. We thank Pierre-Bruno Ruffini for the essential insight he provided to us through his presentation on 4 June 2018 at the seminar that brought us together at the House of Latin America, as well as for the fruitful exchanges he accepted to have with many of us.

<sup>19</sup> A budget of 60 million euros was allocated to initially host about fifty researchers in France for a period of three to five years. The CNRS then implemented a process leading to the selection of the winners of the first phase by an international jury.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, the article by diplomat Jean de Gliniasty (senior researcher at IRIS) "*Une certaine idée de la France*" [A certain idea of France], *Le Monde Diplomatique*, October 2017 and his book *La diplomatie au péril des valeurs* [Diplomacy at the risk of values], 2017, Ed. L'inventaire.

<sup>21</sup> See the article by Pierre-Bruno Ruffini, "*Diplomatie scientifique: une arme majeure sous-employée en France?*" [Science diplomacy: a major weapon under-used in France?]

<https://theconversation.com/diplomatie-scientifique-une-arme-majeure-sous-employee-en-france-74190>.

Even though it is effective, it seems to us that the CNRS's European Research and International Cooperation Department does not have sufficient scope for action to meet its responsibilities regarding solidarity with endangered research activities. It does not really appear to be a body geared to science diplomacy. We must already consider the role that research institutions could play in conjunction with the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation. How can we create strong structural links with these ministries on practical matters of solidarity with institutions and researchers at risk? It seems to us that the CNRS should reflect on carrying out joint actions with its institutional partners, whether French (in particular through alliances such as AVIESAN, AllEnvi and ATHENA), European, or international. It should also provide data for French representatives in international organisations dealing with global public goods (GFTAM, UNITAID, UNAIDS, EDCTP<sup>22</sup>, UN, UNESCO, etc.).

### Conclusion

It is time for unsafe research to be the subject of specific international actions. The CNRS is obviously not the only French institution concerned by such issues of research ethics in countries where research is threatened. Others, like INSERM, INRA, IRD or CIRAD, have programmes involving foreign countries. The CNRS's activity is obviously to be considered in connection with these establishments. However, COMETS believes that the CNRS has a role to play as an initiator. First of all, through its multidisciplinary nature, which grants it a unique outlook on the complexity of the major scientific challenges<sup>23</sup>. In addition, it is strengthened by the resources available within its Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences, which provide an essential insight into situations of political and social conflict. Furthermore, researchers in these disciplines are sometimes, through the subjects they study, at the forefront of the problems posed by the violence that hinders research activity. The CNRS could thus complement its quest for excellence with solidarity-based research, and thus play an essential role in using soft power for peaceful purposes.

---

<sup>22</sup> EDCTP: European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership  
<https://www.edctpgrants.org/Login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2f>

<sup>23</sup> See Rémy Mosseri & Catherine Jeandel, *L'énergie à découvert* [Energy revealed], Paris, 2013, CNRS Editions.



### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

COMETS makes recommendations to the CNRS and research players from a citizen's viewpoint of defending human rights in a spirit of international solidarity and with a view to exercising the right to intervene in countries where research is threatened.

#### A. For safe research conditions

1. The CNRS should develop, together with its Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences and other relevant institutions—including the ANR, France's national research agency—research programmes on specific cases of insecurity in research activities, its causes and remedies.
2. The CNRS should specify the conditions for protecting its staff in contexts of violence, and specify in particular the balance between labour law and ethical obligations.
3. Before even setting up a research project in a context of violence, all researchers must assess its feasibility. They must denounce the abuse they find. They must also be careful not to put their lives in unnecessary danger.
4. The evaluation of a researcher's activity must take into account the insecurity problems which the researcher has had to confront. A laboratory must protect researchers whose programmes are hindered or terminated by violence and reallocate their budgets to other projects in consultation with the research teams. The same applies to doctoral students confronted with the same difficulties.

#### B. For solidarity in research

5. The CNRS should approach the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs to facilitate the granting of visas and work permits to foreign researchers coming to work in France. However, this action must take into consideration the national security requirement induced by the current context.
6. Solidarity with partners suffering from impediments to their research requires an analysis of partnerships with the countries concerned, and in particular an understanding of their needs. It is urgent to carry out these analyses and to propose solutions to remedy them (earmarked doctoral and postdoctoral fellowships, brain-storming workshops, etc.).
7. The CNRS's European Research and International Cooperation Department should establish a strategy for a public policy specific to areas where research is subject to insecurity, by carrying out solidarity actions there. It could be assisted in this task by a small group of researchers with field experience of conflicts and with an ethical outlook.
8. In countries where research is subject to insecurities, researchers must ensure that they do not endanger the safety of colleagues with whom they are collaborating, or involve

them in actions against which they do not have the same protection as themselves. They must not involve them in any whistleblower activities.

**C. For the right to intervene in the name of research**

9. Researchers must denounce the constraints imposed on their freedom of research, and in particular their difficulty in obtaining reliable data, whatever the political context of their study.
10. The handing over by researchers of data, objects or remains belonging to the heritage of a war-torn country or one not respecting the rule of law should be safeguarded as far as possible by international bodies. The CNRS should play a role in diplomatic mediation.
11. The CNRS should make representations to the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the French Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation to this end. It should thus provide data for the interventions of French representatives in international organisations dealing with global public goods (GFTAM, UNITAID, UNAIDS, EDCTP, UN, UNESCO, etc.). It should encourage reflection on joint solidarity actions with its institutional partners, whether French (alliances including AVIESAN, AllEnvi and ATHENA), European or international.



<b>IV. Glossary of abbreviations or acronyms used</b>
---

AllEnvi	<i>Alliance Nationale de Recherche pour l'Environnement</i> [the French National Alliance for Environmental Research]
ANR	<i>Agence nationale de la recherche</i> [French National Research Agency]
ATHENA	<i>Alliance thématique nationale des sciences humaines et sociales</i> [the French National Alliance for Humanities and Social Sciences]
AVIESAN	<i>Alliance nationale pour les sciences de la vie et de la santé</i> [the French National Alliance for Life Sciences and Health]
CERN	European Organization for Nuclear Research
CIRAD	<i>Centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement</i> [the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development]
CNRS	<i>Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique</i> [the French National Centre for Scientific Research]
COMETS	CNRS Ethics Committee
DERCI	<i>Direction Europe de la Recherche et Coopération Internationale</i> [the CNRS's European Research and International Cooperation Department]
EDCTP	European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership
FSD	<i>Fonctionnaire de sécurité de défense</i> [Defence and Security Officer]
GFATM	Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
IAA	International Association for Assyriology
INRIA	<i>Institut National de Recherche en Informatique et en Automatique</i> [the French National Institute for Research in Computer and Control Sciences]
INSERM	<i>Institut National de la Santé et de la Recherche Médicale</i> [the French National Institute of Health and Medical Research]
INSHS	<i>Institut des Sciences Humaines et Sociales</i> [the CNRS's Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences]
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IRD	<i>Institut de Recherche pour le Développement</i> [the French Institute for Research for Development]
MEAE	<i>Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Etrangères</i> [the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs]
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OCBC	<i>Office central de lutte contre le trafic de biens culturels</i> [the French Central Office for the Fight against Trafficking of Cultural Property]
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS
SESAME	Synchrotron-light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNITAID	An international central purchasing agency for medication