

## 2020 Oak Fellow

The 2020 Oak Human Rights Fellow, Nasim Lomani, is a human rights defender and migrants’ rights activist working both in the field and at the political level in Greece and across the EU for over a decade.

In 2001, at the age of 16, Lomani arrived in Greece from Afghanistan. He was arrested and charged with illegal crossing of the Greek border, ultimately serving a two-year prison sentence. During the appeal process, he learned about the bureaucratic difficulties that all migrants face while on the move to Europe. He joined a number of solidarity groups, such as the Network for Social Support to Immigrants and Refugees and the Migrants’ Social Center in Athens, where he coordinated free language classes and the Athens Anti-racist Festival. He also engaged in solidarity work that included lawyers, human rights defenders, as well as refugees and migrants.

Lomani, together with other solidarians, founded and served as one of the key organizers of City Plaza - Refugee Accommodation and Solidarity Space in Athens, where he organized daily life for migrants, managed media communication, coordinated international volunteers, and served as the public representative to researchers, students, and academics.



2020 Oak Human Rights Fellow Nasim Lomani

## Previous Oak Fellows

**2019: Jamila Bargach**, is an activist and scholar who has dedicated her life to serving under-resourced communities in southwest Morocco and creating sustainable initiatives through education and scientific innovation. She is cofounder of Dar Si Hmad, which operates the world’s largest functioning fog collection project.

**2018: Bassam Khabieh**, freelance photojournalist and activist, has documented war crimes and other ongoing human rights violations in the Syrian conflict. His photographs have been featured by organizations such as UNICEF, the World Health Organization, *Reuters*, and *The Atlantic*.

**2017: Jinyan Zeng** is a Chinese filmmaker, blogger, activist, and scholar. Zeng has spent 20 years fighting for people with HIV-AIDS, women facing discrimination, factory workers suffering exploitation, a natural environment threatened by pollution, and political dissidents experiencing repression.

**2016: Khalid Albaih** is a political cartoonist who comments on important causes like freedom of expression and democracy in the Arab world, Islamophobia in the West, and the use of torture and predator drone attacks.

**2015: Jodi Koberinski** has pioneered work in reimagining agriculture and advocating for more equitable food systems.

**2014: Clare Byarugaba** is the coordinator of the Equality and Non-Discrimination Program at Chapter Four Uganda, working on behalf of the LGBTQI+ community to fight social and institutional injustices.

**2013: Maung Maung Than** and **Mya Nandar Aung** have worked with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to protect the rights of stateless people in western Burma and with various organizations to encourage Buddhist-Muslim reconciliation.



2016 Oak Fellow  
Khalid Albaih



2017 Oak Fellow  
Jinyan Zeng

## What We Do

The Oak Institute for Human Rights, established in 1997 by a generous grant from the Oak Foundation, champions the struggles for dignity, freedom, and justice for people throughout the world. Each fall the institute hosts a front-line human rights activist operating in difficult or dangerous circumstances as the Oak Human Rights Fellow. The fellow teaches, relaxes, and thinks while residing at the College. Lectures and other events are organized with the Oak Student Committee to educate the campus and extended community about the fellow’s area of expertise and to encourage participation in research, internships, and activism on behalf of human rights. The institute also provides internship grants and research opportunities to students.



Students with 2018 Oak Human Rights Fellow Bassam Khabieh

## Application Information

Colby

For more information, contact  
Oak Institute for Human Rights

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Waterville, Maine 04901 U.S.A.

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## Oak Human Rights Fellowship



Colby





## The Oak Fellowship

The Oak Fellowship annually offers an opportunity for one prominent human rights activist to take a leave from frontline work and spend the fall semester (end of August through mid-December) in residence at Colby. This provides the fellow with time for respite, reflection, research, and writing. Following the period of the award, the fellow is expected to return home to continue their work in human rights.

The Oak Fellow's responsibilities include regular meetings with students through a small seminar class and informal discussion groups. Additionally, the fellow works with Colby's faculty to share a lecture series or symposium on their human rights interests. The fellow participates in intellectual life on campus, providing Colby students the opportunity to work with an internationally recognized human rights activist.

In addition to a \$36,000 stipend, the fellowship includes health benefits, housing, a campus meal plan, and transportation. The fellowship also provides an office, access to the College's computer and library resources, a student assistant to help with the seminar and research, and secretarial support. To ensure that the fellow fully benefits from the extended respite and safety of the fellowship experience, the program is designed to allow dependent family members to join the fellow in

residence at Colby. A limited budget is allocated to help offset the cost of transportation, housing, and meals for family members who accompany the fellow.

Eligibility for the Oak Fellowship is restricted to those whose work takes place primarily outside the United States. Selection criteria include achievements in the struggle for human rights, the need for respite and relief from danger, and the ability to contribute to the Colby community.



Members of the Colby community attend an immersive presentation of refugee boats crossing the Mediterranean in 2016.

## 2021: Incarceration and Human Rights

**The Oak Institute for Human Rights at Colby College is pleased to issue this call for nominations and applications for the 2021 Oak Fellowship. The 2021-22 theme is Incarceration and Human Rights. Mass incarceration, pretrial detention, and unequal application of the law are among the most pressing issues in the U.S., but human rights violations of people in confinement are a global phenomenon. Prisons, detention centers, and refugee or migrant camps control, manage, and often abuse people defined as criminal or unwanted. The activist's work may focus on exposing violations in detention centers and prisons (torture, abuses, solitary confinement, and more), advocating for judicial alternatives to imprisonment, or challenging arbitrary arrests that relate to socio-economic inequalities and the marginalization of specific populations. Applications are due in full no later than December 30, 2021.**

### About Colby

Colby College, founded in 1813, is one of America's outstanding and most prestigious liberal arts colleges, offering a rigorous academic program that fosters transformational relationships between students and faculty. Located on one of the most beautiful campuses in the nation, Colby overlooks a small New England town in Maine's Kennebec River valley. The College enrolls 2,000 undergraduate students and has 225 faculty members.



Journalist Alia Malek, second from left, following a Oak lecture in 2018.

## Application Information

Nominations for the 2021 Oak Fellowship should be sent to:

Valérie Dionne, Oak Director and Associate Professor of French

Oak Institute for Human Rights  
Colby College  
4650 Mayflower Hill  
Waterville, Maine 04901 U.S.A.

email: [oakhr@colby.edu](mailto:oakhr@colby.edu)  
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More information and application forms are available at [colby.edu/oak](http://colby.edu/oak).

Completed applications must arrive no later than Dec. 30, 2020.

The selection of the 2021 Oak Fellow will be announced by April 30, 2021.