



## **Political repercussions on geoscientists' activities: open questions**

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The Cape Town Statement on Geoethics (<http://www.geoethics.org/ctsg>) expresses that “Only by guaranteeing the intellectual freedom of researchers and practitioners to explore and discover in the Earth system, is it possible for geoscientists to follow ethical approaches in their work“. Freedom is, therefore, the fundamental prerequisite to behave ethically, but, what does “intellectual freedom” mean? What happens when geoscientists are deprived of this freedom?

To promote the discussion on this topic, I present the cases of geoscientists working in the daily forecasting of natural hazards, as part of the national authority. I will start to briefly present which are the typical tasks that we must perform, indicating which should be our ethical duties and professional attitudes, which are our needs and what kind of freedom we need and when.

I will then present the case of geoscientists and geosciences students from a low income country that have been deprived of their freedom due to recent political unrest and repercussions. The measures used by the government have succeeded in frightening and suppressing the freedom of expression of public servants who are unwilling to talk in the open. I will indicate how in the last 10 years bad governance in that country has undermined the credibility of the geoscientific institutions and geoscientists, by reducing freedom. I will indicate the ethical dilemma these geoscientists are facing, and how this disquieting political and social framework has a serious consequence on their occupational activities and on the quality of their scientific results, but mostly on the effectiveness of the services they constantly offer to an already highly vulnerable society, severely exposed to earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, as well as tsunamis, hurricanes, floods, and landslides.

We, as geoscientists, must embrace ethical values in our daily work and recognize our responsibility and obligations towards society and the environment. What can we do when we cannot follow a strict ethical approach in our work because of a political crisis? Which obligations come first in the short term? What we can do in the long term to prevent that recurrent political crises discontinue our efforts to oversee the prevention of natural hazards?