

World Service Authority, Washington, DC

Situated in the heart of Washington, DC, the World Service Authority (WSA) is a non-profit organisation, founded in 1954, with a commitment to accountability, freedom of movement and the promotion of human rights. The organisation's ethos is based on three core principles: One Spirit; One World; One Humankind. As such, there is an international clientele encompassing refugees, asylum seekers and citizens whose human rights have been violated.

During the first two-weeks of my internship, I undertook an intense training course conducted by the WSA's supervising attorney. The training focused on: national and constitutional law protections of human rights, regional and international law protections of human rights and the philosophy of law, politics and ethics. Having the opportunity to learn directly from an attorney who specialised in international human rights law meant any questions I had pertaining to practising in this area were answered while I was training and working on cases.

Upon completion of my training, I was able to independently manage my own caseload under the guidance of the supervising attorney. In my capacity as Associate General Counsel, no two days were the same. Whether I was researching legal remedies for a group of displaced Ogoni people or contacting various heads of states on behalf of citizens who had been tortured while unlawfully detained, each day welcomed fresh challenges.

In addition to my allocated ongoing cases, my duties included managing the worldwide enquiries sent daily to the organisation. With requests coming through 24 hours a day, I soon found that prioritising clients by the urgency of human rights violation was the only way in which one could effectively navigate through cases. The supervising attorney and I would meet frequently to discuss new cases and action plans. My case plans comprised drafting pertinent questions for the client and witnesses, discussing relevant disclosure and researching possible avenues for redress.

Each day I researched violating states' obligations under treaties and declarations, as well as their national constitutions in order to establish a legal basis for our clients. Members of the

legal department were always more than happy to consider my ideas and share advice so I always felt acknowledged and supported. The supervising attorney would finally review my case plans which enabled me to interview clients, research the applicable law and draft letters to the relevant authorities regarding the breach of human rights. Being given the autonomy to write to government officials, embassies and members of Congress, draft case plans and take instructions from clients afforded me invaluable legal experience.

Put simply, my role was twofold - I would effectively build a case for new clients and work on exhausting local remedies for ongoing clients, where applicable, in order to elevate their cases to the international level. In doing so, I had to overcome some limits of international human rights law, one of which is enforcement. For example, a national court ruled in favour of our clients regarding the breach of their human rights; however, their government had not complied with the decision so in actuality, our clients' situations had not changed. I was aware of such issues in an academic context but being tasked with researching mechanisms for enforcement highlighted the difficulties attorneys have to overcome in this area.

Throughout my time at the WSA, the organisation's commitment to providing free strategic legal advice and their policy of helping as many citizens as possible was incredibly inspiring. We would often contact various NGOs, law firms, homeless shelters and charities in the client's requisite country, then work alongside such organisations by providing advocacy, amicus curiae briefs and suggesting possible legal avenues to explore, which could be considered far beyond the remit of most legal departments. Furthermore, residing in Washington, DC during the presidential election period gave me firsthand insight into American politics. I took full advantage of the fact Washington, DC is home to numerous think tanks, law firms and pressure groups, but as a future advocate, attending the Supreme Court was the perfect ending to a truly insightful internship.

I would like to sincerely thank the HRLA for their generosity and for supporting me in my endeavours. I am currently undertaking an MSc in Human Rights and can honestly say that this internship enriched both my knowledge and practical understanding of international human rights law. My work in Washington, DC will remain an important aspect of my professional development and I am sure the skills I have acquired will prove instructive when I commence pupillage next autumn.