

The International Criminal Court, Appeals Chamber

I am fortunate to have completed a four month internship in the Appeals Chamber of the International Criminal Court, funded by the Human Rights Lawyers Association bursary scheme. I am immensely grateful to the HRLA for their generous financial assistance, without which I would not have benefited from this unique exposure to the practice of international criminal justice.

I am a Masters student at Sciences Po, Paris in *Human Rights and Humanitarian Action*. I graduated from King's College London in Law with European Legal Studies in 2017. My aspiration to become a human rights lawyer was my chief motivation for choosing to study Law. I tailored my undergraduate study to subjects relevant to human rights protection, electing courses in Human Rights Law, Comparative Constitutional Law and Medical Law and Ethics. Seeking to specialise by way of post-graduate study, I chose Sciences Po for the practical ambit and policy orientation of its programme as well as the opportunity it offered to develop my lingual competencies, which I considered essential in the practice of international law. It was during my inter-disciplinary Masters study that I developed a real interest in the work of the International Criminal Court as a political creation but nonetheless a legal mechanism to hold perpetrators of international crimes to account.

The ICC Today

The International Criminal Court has a relatively young jurisdiction. Created in 1998, the Court's creation and indeed existence today serves to close the impunity gap by ensuring accountability for the commission of international crimes. The crimes falling within the court's jurisdiction include genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The ICC represents more than a mechanism for prosecuting those responsible for those crimes. It also functions as a victim-orientated paradigm of justice as developing areas of the court's jurisprudence, including reparations proceedings, indicate. Though a criminal jurisdiction, the influence of international human rights law on the exercise of the court's jurisdiction is both apparent and an essential check on that exercise. Though critics differ in their views of the proper place that ought to be accorded to human rights in the ICC's jurisdiction, Article 21 of the Rome Statute, the Court's founding document, mandates the court to interpret and apply the provisions of the Rome Statute in accordance with "internationally recognised human rights."

Internship Duties and Responsibilities

My time at the ICC was a varied and stimulating experience which provided a valuable insight into the wheels of international justice. I specifically applied to intern in the Appeals Chamber because it has the final say on matters litigated before the Court. However, Appeals work also poses its own challenges: it comes at the end of often complex and lengthy judicial proceedings spanning many years. Getting to grips with the various pre-trial and trial decisions that preceded the grounds of appeal was a challenge.

Assigned to the Presiding Judge, I worked on the *Lubanga* Reparations Appeal. This was a particularly interesting case to work on as Mr Lubanga was the first individual to be convicted by the court for the crimes of conscription and enlistment of child soldiers. The case concerned the reparations proceedings which raised interesting questions of victim status, victim participation and accountability. As a developing area of the court's jurisprudence, reparations work also offers scope for quite innovative and theoretical thinking which I enjoyed.

My tasks included conducting factual and legal research on procedural and substantive issues of Law and drafting legal memoranda setting out my findings to questions set by the team. Having the opportunity to research criminal matters in comparative jurisprudence, enabled me to learn a great deal about comparative criminal law approaches and I developed a well-rounded understanding of international criminal law, and its mechanisms, as a result. I undoubtedly improved my research and analytical competencies.

I also applied my knowledge of French by reading victim testimonies and judgments from various African Chambers that were available only in the French language. I assisted in legal drafting and attended court hearings. I felt very much involved in the Appeals team at all times. Receiving instructions and guidance from a team of intellectual legal professionals and judges was a true privilege.

I was also very lucky to be in The Hague during the Assembly of State Parties ('ASP') on the 20th anniversary of the Rome Statute. The ASP is a full annual plenary in which International Criminal Court states convene to discuss and decide approaches to issues that are central to the future functioning of the ICC. Attendance at the ASP enabled me to acquire exposure to a range of civil society organisations, academics and practitioners on various topics of international criminal law. This, in addition to the Court's training programme for interns and visiting professionals, ensured that I gained a well-rounded insight and understanding of various matters pertinent to the court's work. I left with a much greater appreciation of the court's role in securing international justice.

My experience at the ICC was a formative one and I am grateful for having gained an understanding of the workings of international criminal justice 'from the inside.' I am indebted to the HRLA bursary scheme for the first-hand experience I acquired, the viewpoints formed and the learning experience that it has made possible.

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