

Human Rights Lawyers Association Bursary Report
Julia Freytag - The International Criminal Court

From January until December 2023, I was a Visiting Professional at the International Criminal Court (ICC). This placement was supported by a bursary from the Human Rights Lawyers Association (HRLA). Without the assistance from the HRLA, I would not have been able to undertake my placement with the ICC and so I am extremely grateful for their support.

Inspired and encouraged by the advocates and Judges working at the ICC, my placement strengthened my desire to work as a barrister in the UK. Keen to now ‘cut my teeth’ on domestic work and further hone my advocacy skills, I have learned a lot at the ICC and consider the experience more than a CV-strengthening or contact gathering exercise. I am pleased that I have been able to gain insight and new skills, particularly drafting and research skills.

I worked in the Trial Chamber on the Ali Muhammad Ali Abd- Al- Rahman (‘Ali Kushayb’) case. My duties and responsibilities were broad, for example, I drafted decisions, orders, and directions on behalf of Chambers which ranged from procedural matters to substantive replies. Building on my studies into the Law and Practice of International Organisations at Leiden University, I learned about the legal frameworks which govern Sudan’s relationship with the ICC, and I drafted decisions regarding cooperation with the Court.

I gained insight into the ICC’s relationship with the UN Security Council as the Prosecutor of the ICC, Karim A. A. Khan KC, simultaneously updated the Security Council about our case in January 2023. He updated the Security Council again over the Summer due to the ongoing events across Sudan. Having closely followed the Sudanese revolution(s) over the past few years, I was deeply saddened to see the fighting erupt between the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudanese Armed Forces in April 2023, with countless harrowing reports of mass violence and suffering. The trial is impacted by the devastating events unfolding in Sudan; however, the proceedings have continued in order to ensure justice and accountability for those in Darfur.

Beyond my work assisting with cooperation decisions, I reviewed Victim applications and confirmed whether the applicants met the eligibility test to qualify as victims. I also worked on reparations submissions and learned how reparations orders are drafted, exploring the various categorisations of harm which can occur. Additionally, I attended Court, assessing, inter alia, witnesses, experts, and the credibility of arguments. My duties and responsibilities were varied, and I was keen to take advantage of the training opportunities available; I attended a Satellite Imagery as Evidence in International Judicial Proceedings Course and continued to learn Arabic by enrolling in courses provided by the ICC Staff Union.

I cannot thank HRLA enough for this opportunity; I have learned a lot, and I am very grateful to have had this experience to work at the ICC and bolster my skills and networks.