

## IHRP FELLOWSHIP FINAL REPORT

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Office of the Registrar

<http://www.icty.org/>



*The ICTY office building.*

In my post-1L summer, the generous funding of the International Human Rights Program (IHRP) allowed me to pursue an internship with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague. The United Nations established the ICTY as an *ad hoc* court in 1993 to address the war crimes brought about by the breakup of Yugoslavia from 1991-1992, and the conflicts that persisted thereafter. With the tribunal slated to close in November of 2017, I got to experience firsthand the final phase in the completion of its mandate.

As a Legal Intern in the Immediate Office of the Registrar (IOR), my work dealt with a number of unique legal and judicial concerns. The ICTY is not a national court, so it falls upon the IOR—and the Registry more broadly—to take on duties generally assumed by ministries within a domestic system (i.e. the Department of Justice in Canada). Among other responsibilities, the Registry governs the detention of indictees, the operation of trials, and the spearheading of the ICTY’s overall diplomatic function. The last of these includes the ICTY’s relationship with the host state, its member states, and members of the public generally.

As such, the IOR’s work touches on a myriad of functions and an even greater number of stakeholders. Though many of my projects were confidential, they generally involved researching and drafting memoranda on matters of diplomatic and jurisprudential importance. This included the formulation of official responses by the ICTY to claims, requests, and motions made by world governments.

Apart from these public-facing matters, I also had the opportunity to engage with complex internal litigation arising from staff disputes and other claims brought against the ICTY. Most notably, I drafted submissions to the United Nations Dispute Tribunal (UNDT) in Geneva, where my work was put to use against claims that had been filed by litigants against the ICTY. Though it was initially daunting to take the first stab at such important documents, it proved incredibly rewarding and the feedback I received from my supervisors has improved my legal writing immensely. Balancing these projects with other day-to-day tasks also taught me a great deal about managing expectations.

My legal research also served to brief the ICTY’s Registrar, John Hocking, on relevant matters for the various conferences and diplomatic dialogues he attended over the summer. During my third week on the job, Mr. Hocking took part in a panel on the legacy of the ICTY, where he cited research I had done on *Mucić et al.*, otherwise known as the *Čelebići* case. Speaking to an audience of scholars, judges, and diplomats, Mr. Hocking used my findings on a witness’s story to demonstrate the importance of remembering, above all else, the victims of the wars in Yugoslavia. The moment has stayed with me—my work on the matter reached an audience of influence, and the message reminded everyone present of the importance of the ICTY’s mission.

The setting in which I carried out these duties proved just as interesting as the work itself. In law school, we often look at cases and decisions without taking a full view to their political ramifications (whether domestically or internationally). Being part of the public-facing arm of an international body like the ICTY made these assessments a subject of both intrigue and necessity. Moreover, it led me to do away with many of the notions I had about international law, and to understand it as a much more palpable force than I had previously.

“International law” is often discussed in North American law schools in something of a nebulous or intangible fashion; at the very least, students tend to dismiss the field as lacking in professional opportunities. This is less true in the European Union and perhaps other jurisdictions generally, where many law students see the subject less like an abstract ideal and more like a messy reality. Among those who grew up in the EU—where day-to-day social and economic realities are shaped by the interactions between its constituents’ various legal systems—there is a much stronger interest in the aims and mechanisms of international law. I believe this outlook has been pivotal to the widespread recognition of the ICTY’s legitimacy. This made itself clear not only in the diplomatic content of my work, but in the perspectives of my European colleagues.

That brings me, of course, to the people I met this summer. First, there were the other interns. The ICTY’s intake of law students was large, diverse, and immensely collegial. The countries represented by our cohort this summer ran the gamut from Thailand to Russia to Burundi; the environment made for a literal cultural mosaic. Everyone was eager to learn from one another, and I often came out of casual conversations feeling as though I’d learned something new about another country or culture. To be able to install myself in such a unique and vibrant constellation of people—especially at such a formative age—is something I’ll be forever thankful for.

Second, there were my supervisors within the IOR itself. My team proved just as diverse as the intern class, coming from various walks of life and from all around the world. Many of my seniors were keen on providing fulsome, constructive criticism and meaningful mentorship. There was also a real sense of community within the IOR—we regularly discussed travel, celebrated birthdays, and marked staff departures (including my own) with wine, cake, and presents.

Outside of work, The Hague was a charming, beautiful city to live in. It was also a short train ride away from Amsterdam along with other major Dutch cities (making day trips highly affordable), and a great gateway into the rest of Europe. I used my holidays this summer to make brief trips to Belgium, France, Ireland, and Germany, meeting up with other IHRP fellows along the way.

All in all, my IHRP fellowship has been a definitive aspect of my law school experience. I could rave about my summer for far longer than three pages—but I would be remiss if I didn’t convey the extent of my gratitude for the team that made this possible. I am endlessly thankful for the work of the IHRP office, and I sincerely believe they are among the best assets available at this law school. We are beyond lucky to have them, and I would encourage any future students interested in human rights to seek opportunities with the program.