

IHRP Fellowship: Final Report
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I have dreamed about working for Human Rights Watch (HRW) since my first year of undergrad, nearly seven years ago. This summer, thanks to the International Human Rights Program (IHRP), I had the opportunity to work as a fellow with the Women's Rights Division at the HRW headquarters in New York City. The experience was everything I hoped it would be and more.



(L) Empire State Building (R) Entrance to the main reception area of HRW on the 34th floor of the Empire State Building. Human Rights Watch (HRW) is a non-profit, nongovernmental human rights organization, staffed by human rights professionals including country experts, lawyers, journalists, and academics of diverse backgrounds and nationalities. HRW is known for its accurate fact-finding, impartial reporting, effective use of media, and targeted advocacy, often in partnership with local human rights groups. Each year, HRW publishes more than 100 reports and briefings on human rights conditions in some 90 countries, generating extensive coverage in local, national, and international media. HRW leverages this media attention by meeting with governments, the

United Nations, regional groups like the African Union and the European Union, financial institutions, and corporations to advocate for changes in policy and practice that promote human rights and justice around the world. The Women's Rights Division at HRW works toward the realization of women's empowerment and gender equality, protecting the rights and improving the lives of women around the world.

My main project this summer involved providing research assistance to Skye Wheeler, the emergencies researcher for the Women's Rights Division, for an upcoming report on violations of the human rights of sex workers in South Africa. The report is based on Skye's interviews with sex workers and other stakeholders in South Africa, including police, government officials, and sex workers' rights activists with organizations like Sex Workers Education & Advocacy Task force (SWEAT) and Sonke Gender Justice.

I was fortunate to have the opportunity to research, draft, and edit parts of every chapter of the report. For the background chapter, my research included such topics as violence against women in South Africa, constitutional and other legislative protections guaranteeing freedom from violence, government policies and practices to combat violence against women, and statistics on employment and women's economic disadvantages in South Africa. For the chapter on police profiling, harassment, and abuse of sex workers, I looked into available data on arrests and prosecutions for prostitution-related offences and mechanisms for police accountability. I also compiled an annex of NGO reports on police abuses against sex workers in South Africa. For the legal section, I researched and wrote about sex work under national and international law.

Once the report was drafted and passed on for review, I worked on the media package. I drafted a press release, an op-ed, a media note, and a couple dozen tweets to be posted in the week leading up to the report's release. I really appreciated the opportunity to develop and improve upon my media writing skills, as I did not have a lot of experience in that style. Skye was a journalist before she came to HRW, so she was an excellent teacher. It turned out I had a knack for drafting tweets – so much so that an associate asked me to read through an upcoming report on inhumane detention conditions in Greece and draft several tweets for the launch of that report. I was more than happy to oblige.

One of the highlights of my summer was the lunchtime speaker series at the office. The speakers included Samuel Moyn, a professor of law and history at Yale and author of *Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World*; Damian Griffis, a leading indigenous and disability rights advocate from Australia; and Minky Worden, Director of Global Initiatives at HRW. Every speaker shared remarkable stories about their work in human rights and imparted genuinely helpful advice on how to be an effective advocate. The last speaker of the summer was Executive Director of HRW, Kenneth Roth. I was quite starstruck. He spoke about the role of HRW, the current priorities of the organization, and the challenges human rights advocates can expect to face in the coming decades. It was a wonderful close to the speaker series.



Panel discussion following the screening of *The Silence of Others*, with filmmakers Almudena Carracedo & Robert Bahar, Chato Galante, film subject, Fernando Travesi, Exec Dir, ICTJ and Param-Preet Singh, Assoc Dir, Intl Justice Program, HRW Moderated by Emma Daly, Comms Director, HRW.

Finally, I was lucky enough to be working as a fellow during the HRW New York Film Festival. The festival ran from June 14 through to June 21 and included fifteen films, twelve of which were directed or co-directed by women. I managed to see nine films the week of the Festival and I hope to see the other six at some point; they all tell phenomenal stories. One of my favourite films was *The Silence of Others*. The documentary follows a group of victims and survivors of Spain's 40-year dictatorship under General Franco. Their pursuit of justice is impeded by "the pact of forgetting," a 1977 amnesty law prohibiting legal action related to the oppression, torture, and murder of an estimated 100,000 people during Franco's regime. I was so moved by the tenacity of the film subjects, their commitment to justice in the face of enormous obstacles, both state-imposed and cultural. It was a real privilege to hear from one of the film subjects, Chato Galante, following the screening.

I loved my work this summer, but my favourite aspect of the fellowship experience was the people I met and worked with. I learned so much from Skye and the whole Women's Rights Division, from the lunchtime speakers, and from everyone I bumped in to around the office. It was such a privilege to spend a summer at HRW, and I am eternally grateful to the IHRP for the opportunity to work for this outstanding organization.



Goodbye Lunch on my last day at the office, with Kelly (L) who works in Development, and Tabashshum (R) who was just hired as a new WRD associate.