

IHRP Reflection

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As my time at The Hague is coming to a close, the feeling is bittersweet. In one sense, I felt that I truly gained a sense of what working in international criminal law is like, and the experience here only confirmed this is the path I wanted to take. My supervisors were wonderful role models, some who had been in the international criminal law field since the inception of the first *ad hoc* tribunals. Like me, many of their experiences began as interns.

Yet, there are no straight roads that lead to a career in international criminal law, and as I found out over the course my summer, today there are far more qualified people than positions. I was told, again and again, that bringing in past experience from domestic practice is critical to contributing to international criminal law. And so, while I leave The Hague saddened that it might be years before I am able to come back and work in this field, I know that I will take the lessons I learned here and apply them to my future studies at the University of Toronto, and to practice in Canada.

Sadly, I will be leaving the Special Tribunal for Lebanon just as the parties are about to conclude the main *Ayyash et al* case and give their closing arguments. (However, I might be livestreaming them discretely during my first week of classes). While the Appeals Chambers was never seized during my internship, we were still kept busy with plenty to do, whether that was preparing research on topics likely to be raised during the final appeal, working on speeches and academic work for the judges, the diplomatic functions of the President of the Tribunal, or on other matters relating to the jurisdiction of the tribunals.

With due respect to my law school professors, I often joke that I learned more in my first week of my internship with the STL than I did in my first year of law school. I received my first major assignment on my second day of work, which was not international criminal law at all, but international administrative law. As part of the UN System, the STL adheres to UN dispute settlement practices, with our own judges from the Appeals Chambers overseeing appeals from disputes between staff members and the Tribunal. I was called to assist one of our judges with this case, and while the details are confidential, exposed me to fascinating new areas of law, including legal history that I could never imagine would come together.

The Appeals Chambers of the STL works closely with the Office of the President, so as interns we were often called to serve both branches, with the judges of the Chambers performing more judicial functions, and the Office of the President performing more administrative and diplomatic roles. One week I was called into the President's office and was tasked with writing a memo, which ended up



being 30 pages comparing certain aspects of criminal procedure between the tribunals. Once I was finished, I was asked to present my memorandum before the President the next day. I don't think I had ever been so nervous, but that was nothing compared to the moment I realized, while I was waiting to give my

Appeals Chambers goes for food and drinks at the beach

presentation, that my presentation would be attended by all the legal officers from Appeals Chambers.

I'm using these examples to show the enormous trust our supervisors put in us as interns and by giving me these responsibilities, without caring whether we had the right pre-requisite courses or where our law degrees came from. By trusting the interns as they did, our legal skills were refined, and we were really able to grow. At first I was shy about approaching the judges, or calling my supervisors for help. But by the end of my time at the STL, my confidence about my legal skills grew and I was unafraid to approach my superiors, and ask for guidance on my work, or simply career advice.

It was a great pleasure to work closely with the Judges of the Appeals Chamber as well. In addition to our legal work we often had to work on the speeches, presentations of judges, or assist them in preparing for local moot court competitions. Judge Baragwanath, who was formerly a Judge in the New Zealand Court of Appeal, had a wealth of knowledge on every matter of law imaginable; civil, criminal, international and corporate. If I ever had a question on a matter of law, I could go to his office and he would pull half a dozen books off his shelf and happily elaborate on what I needed to know. Judge Nsereko, who had previously served in the Appeals Chamber of the ICC could answer any question about international criminal law, and I was delighted to be able to help him on some of his projects as well.

Another highlight from my summer was that on my own vacation time, I was able to go to Lebanon. For valid security reasons the STL is seated in The Hague and not Beirut. However, I felt that it was important to see the country I had spent so much of the summer learning about. I had some friends I made at the Tribunal who were in Lebanon at the time, and I took a week off to do some much needed traveling. Aside from eating fantastic mezze, exploring ruins ancient cities of Byblos, Sidon and Tyre, and having drinks in Beirut's lively neighbourhoods, I learned more about Lebanon's civil war and the political context that led to the assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.



The view from the top of the crusader castle, in Byblos, Lebanon

Last summer was also an interesting time to be in The Hague, generally because of several important cases were heard in international law. Much to the shock of everyone in the international law community, the Appeals Chambers of the ICC acquitted Former Vice-President Bemba of Crimes against humanity. While not binding on other tribunals, like the STL, the decision had important implications for international justice, and the role of an appellate level chamber in interpreting the evidentiary and fact finding role of a Trial Chamber.

I would like to take this time to thank Samer Muscati and the IHRP program from this wonderful opportunity. It is surely not one I will soon forget, I am grateful for the doors it has opened for me in international criminal law.