

Thanks to the generosity of the IHRP and UT Law, I had the fantastic opportunity to intern for 4 months as an advocacy and legal intern at FIDH (The International Federation for Human Rights) in New York City. FIDH is a federation with 179 member organizations in leagues all around the world. First established in 1922, FIDH is an INGO dedicated to defending universal rights entrenched in several key UN documents including the Universal Declaration for Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Additionally, FIDH advocates for accountability for human rights violations by UN member states and the United Nations itself and fights impunity as a staunch advocate and supporter of the Rome Statute and the accountability mechanisms offered by the International Criminal Court. The FIDH New York office where I spent my summer is an observer NGO to the United Nations, which means that it reports on and forms advocacy initiatives targeted at UN Security Council (UNSC) Members and GA Members. With all these functions in mind, I thought, what could be a better way to observe and participate in the field of international human rights law and advocacy?

Throughout my time at FIDH I had the chance to work on several exciting advocacy initiatives (which I will highlight below) and attend many meetings with UN Security Council Members, Special Rapporteurs, Special Representatives to the Secretary General and work in concert with well-respected INGOs. I met with the Ambassadors of France, Guatemala, Australia, Switzerland, the EU, and Luxembourg at off-the-record NGO meetings offering an inside glimpse at the sometimes-tumultuous dynamics of the inner workings of the UN Security Council (Syria anyone?). On the flipside I also met with people who are out in the field, bearing witness to the realities on the ground and reporting to those of us ensconced in the Ivory Towers of Academia and grey Skyscrapers of mid-town Manhattan missions. People like Paulo Pinheiro (Chairman of the International Commission of Inquiry for Syria), spokespersons for the Syrian National Coalition, Leila Zerrougui (The Secretary General's Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict), and Mary Robinson (The Secretary General's Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region) to name a few. Additionally, we worked closely with representatives at Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the Global Center on the Responsibility to Protect to prod UN members to address the continuing ethnic violence and human rights violations in Burma.

A benefit that a federated organization like FIDH can offer to UN and State officials is its close connection and cooperation with local and grassroots NGOs. This on-the-ground knowledge lends an air of legitimacy and credibility to the intel gathered by such INGOs and causes UN dignitaries and state officials to take note. And take note they did as the FIDH New York office took the initiative to bring a human rights defender from Indonesia to testify at the Tom Lantos Commission in Washington DC on the religious persecution and radicalization

occurring throughout Indonesia and the ongoing impunity for human rights violations in West Papua. As the legal/advocacy intern, I had the chance to both liaise with UN officials in organizing this crucial visit and to contribute to strengthening the final testimony that the Indonesian representative of KontraS gave at the Commission.

On the substantive end, I was responsible for several advocacy and legal research projects. I will briefly highlight 3 such projects below:

Projects

1. *The SCO, The UN and Protecting Human Rights while Countering Terrorism*

My major legal research/independent project was on the United Nations duty to respect human rights in its counter-terrorism policies and partnerships. The UN Counter-terrorism Implementation Task Force (“CTITF”) has a mandate to unite nations in the global war against terror. At the same time, the CTITF is required to fight terrorism while respecting the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration for Human Rights. Therefore any cooperative efforts in the fight against terrorism must be in accordance with international law. Security Council Resolution 1456 (2003) with regard to the UN’s Counter-Terrorism Committee stipulates that “States must ensure that any measures taken to combat terrorism comply with all their *obligations under international law*, and should *adopt such measures in accordance with international law*, in particular *international human rights, refugee, and humanitarian law*”. Despite these commitments, FIDH is concerned that certain counter-terrorism efforts, especially those of regional bodies established outside the UN framework contravene international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law. In particular, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (“SCO”) has been on FIDH’s radar as a regional organization with highly questionable human rights practices. FIDH is particularly concerned given a recent (2011) publication by the UN’s Counter-Terrorism Committee on Recommendations for Practical Ways to Implement Resolution 1373 [Resolution 1373 was a 2001 Security Council Resolution that established the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee] wherein specific reference was made to the need for more active engagement with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization’s Anti--Terrorist Structure. Given many signals of enhanced cooperation between the UN and regional organizations like the SCO and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), I worked on an internal addendum to a report published by FIDH in 2012 on the SCO that will be presented as part FIDH’s advocacy strategy to senior New York UN officials this fall (2013).

2. *The Bedouin of the Negev & Land Rights*

As so often happens with human rights organizations, this summer several major international developments resulted in my supervisor being called away to FIDH missions abroad. One of these missions involved flying to Israel to assist the Bedouin minority population in the Negev in forming an advocacy strategy against forced eviction. This resulted in me helping prepare some advocacy materials on the Bedouin issue as well. Although I’m not even

remotely qualified to discuss Israeli property law (few are, really), I was able to contribute in some small way by offering case examples on the duty to consult from none other than Canadian Aboriginal law (shout-out to Professor Ian Lee, 1L Constitutional Law), and the consultation processes from other countries like New Zealand.

3. Protection of Civilians: Protection of Journalists

One of the most exciting FIDH initiatives I worked on this summer was on preparing an advocacy letter to the UNSC members in preparation for their Protection of Journalists debate. Under the Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), 8 June 1977, article 79.1 states that journalists engaged in dangerous professional missions in areas of armed conflict shall be considered as civilians. What this means is that journalists are entitled to the same protections afforded to civilians in armed conflict – yet this commitment is not uniformly enforced. As documented time and time again journalists are routinely targeted in armed conflicts specifically for the work they do; corrupt state officials and criminal organizations also target journalists during situations of peace. In a letter to the UNSC members, we made sure to reference the fact that the UNSC has a responsibility to ensure the protection of journalists because they report on the very events of direct consequence to international peace and security. Journalists are the first human rights monitors and reporters on the ground and it is the duty of the international community to support them in this vital work. This advocacy letter was a huge coup for FIDH (and me) because we were the only INGO at the UN to pen a letter for the UNSC members on this debate and several Ambassadors including 3 P5 members made direct reference to our recommendations. This was a real opportunity to see that the work we do in some small way can make a difference.

Thanks again to the IHRP, particularly Carmen Cheung, for all their support this summer in allowing me to access the fascinating world of international advocacy and diplomacy.