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Summer Report, International Human Rights Program
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This summer I spent 14 weeks in Harare, Zimbabwe as an intern in the Protection Unit in the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). My supervisor was Ron Mponda, the Senior Protection Officer.

My internship unfolded in three stages of preparation, practice and research. For the first three weeks, I completed a reading plan prepared by Mr. Mponda to provide me with a solid grounding in international and Zimbabwean refugee law. I knew very little when I began and soon knew far more. Every few days Mr. Mponda would field my questions. Concurrently, I observed interviews conducted by UNHCR staff with refugee clients. These included protection assessments and resettlements interviews. During these interviews and then from reviewing individual files, I gained a fuller understanding of the work done by program officers, resettlement officers and protection officers.

Subsequently, I began to make small practical contributions to the office. I conducted interviews with refugees visiting the office during Tuesday office hours with sundry questions. On several occasions I visited a local prison where asylum-seekers and refugees were being held. I also completed resettlement file reviews and provided recommendations for 18 cases.

In the final two months of my internship, I began a lengthy research project regarding the cessation of refugee status for Rwandans. Two UNHCR-recommended deadlines have come and gone for the cessation of refugee status of Rwandans who fled persecution before 1999, yet some 75,000 Rwandan refugees remain in countries of asylum. After UNHCR announced its comprehensive plan for the resolution of the Rwandan refugee situation in 2009, it hoped for a “heavily reduced residual population still in exile” by the end of 2011. This did not occur, nor has any significant change occurred since. What, then, is the status of the cessation process for Rwandan refugees? This was the subject of a paper I hope this will become the basis of an academic article.

I wish to thank the University of Toronto law school’s International Human Rights Program and Ron Mponda for the opportunity to pursue this work. I heartily recommend the experience to subsequent students.