International Women’s Human Rights

International Women’s Human Rights (IWHR) Clinic interns engage in cutting edge human rights work in the U.S. and around the world. Interns develop a sound understanding of international human rights and sharpen lawyering skills necessary for effective law reform advocacy work applicable in both U.S. and international contexts. The Clinic’s work focuses on gender-based violence, reproductive rights, sexual orientation and gender identity, economic and social rights, children’s rights and anti-trafficking work.

PRACTICE HIGHLIGHT

Fact Finding Trips to Turkey: In January, clinic interns in the Iraq Project participated in a 3 day work shop with Iraqi activists in Turkey. The workshop covered documentation of violations and treaty protocol for Iraq’s upcoming review for the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Clinic interns collected testimony on issues of gender based violence such as forced, temporary and/or child marriage, honor crimes, sex trafficking, and treatment of women in detention centers. Their testimony will be featured in IWHR’s legal submission for the ICCPR review.

Last May, clinic interns in the Syria Project travelled to Turkey and Lebanon to conduct trainings in how to identify gender-based violence violations and how to navigate the CEDAW review for Syrian women’s rights organizations and activists. They interviewed women currently living under ISIS-controlled areas for a legal submission to the UN Commission on the Inquiry of Syria. In the fall, clinic interns made a follow up trip to gather more testimonies from the women and organizations.

Fact Finding Trip to Colombia: This February, clinic interns travelled to Colombia to gather first person accounts of former child soldiers and advocates with the organization Taller de Vida. Colombia will be up for review by the UN Committee Against Torture and these survivors’ stories will be included in an IWHR legal submission. The interns also conducted human rights trainings for families displaced by the armed conflict in Colombia as well as participated in trainings on transitional justice.

Advocating on Behalf of Youth in the Criminal Justice System: Cynthia Soohoo and three IWHR Clinic interns were invited by the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of the Child to participate in a meeting and report writing session on youth in the criminal justice system. The meeting took place at the Inter American Council on Human Rights in Washington, DC. IWHR Fellow, J.M. Kirby, supervises a team of students working in the Youth Justice Project, who testified at a NYC hearing on the treatment of youth at Rikers Island.

Supporting Reproductive Health Rights: In March, IWHR Professor Cynthia Soohoo, and Diana Aragundi and Sarah Verbil participated in a hearing on women’s reproductive rights in McAllen, Texas. The hearing was held by Nuestro Texas in partnership with the Center for Reproductive Rights, to address barriers that prevent Latino and immigrant communities in the Lower Rio Grande Valley from accessing reproductive health care.

SPOTLIGHT

Alumni: IWHR has graduated approximately 165 alumni. This semester alumni Pam Spees and Katherine Gallagher, Senior Staff Attorneys at the Center for Constitutional Rights, returned to the Clinic as guest speakers.

IWHR clinic interns at Colombia trainings 2015

PROJECTS AND PARTNERS

Seeking Accountability for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence against Syrian Women: IWHR works with local Syrian women’s organizations that serve refugees on the Turkey-Syria border, who are seeking accountability and redress for crimes committed in the context of the Syrian conflict. IWHR conducts trainings on human rights documentation and reporting.

Promoting the Rights, Protection, and Physical Security of Marginalized and at Risk Iraqis: IWHR works to promote human rights and democracy and the wellbeing of marginalized Iraqis. IWHR provides legal, capacity building, and technical skills and trains women’s organizations to document human rights violations.

Redress for Colombian Child Soldiers: IWHR works to address human rights violations committed against demobilized child soldiers and Afro-Colombians. IWHR provides training in transitional justice processes and initiative creation with a gender perspective.

US Anti Trafficking Project: IWHR works to address and end the criminalization of individuals trafficked into sex work. The project has both provided direct representation to clients who have been victims of trafficking and engaged in advocacy to change law and policies to protect trafficking victims.

Youth in Adult Jails and Prisons: IWHR has spearheaded international human rights advocacy in the U.S. addressing children under 18 who are tried in adult criminal courts and who serve sentences in adult facilities. IWHR works internationally and domestically to help juvenile justice activists incorporate human rights law into their advocacy work.

Reproductive Rights in Texas, Asia and Latin America: IWHR uses human rights standards to address reproductive rights and health issues including forced sterilization, contraception bans, and funding cuts to reproductive health clinics.

From left to right: IWHR Clinic intern Sarah Verbil (’15) and Professor Cynthia Soohoo, and IWHR Clinic intern Diana Aragundi (’15)