The Human Rights & Gender Justice

Clinic (HRGJ) started off the new semester with an update to its name. Formerly the International Women’s Human Rights Clinic, the change reflects the broadening range of topics on which HRGJ students work, including women, youth, and LGBT issues, and engaging men in ending gender based violence.

Students are currently working on reproductive rights issues in Texas and the U.S. Supreme Court, youth in prisons, representing clients in Syria who are working on women’s rights, and clients in Iraq working on women and LGBT rights in the context of ISIS.

Last fall students in both the Syria and Iraq projects travelled to Istanbul, Turkey to meet with their clients, along with victims and witnesses of gender based violence from those countries. They conducted interviews about the human rights abuses being carried out by state and non-state actors and held know your rights trainings on the application of international law. The students used this testimony in submissions to the UN Human Rights Council recommending necessary action that should be taken to protect women and LGBT rights. They also presented their findings at a public event held at the Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute at Hunter College.

Within the context of reproductive rights, clinic students in HRGJ represented the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health and filed an amicus brief in Whole Woman’s Health v. Cole, which was argued before the U.S. Supreme Court on March 3, 2016. The brief describes the impact of Texas House Bill 2 (H.B. 2) on the 2.5 million Latinas of reproductive age in Texas. For these women, the scarcity of appointments, increased wait times, and cost and travel distances resulting from clinic closures will be a substantial, and in many cases insurmountable, obstacle to accessing legal abortion services. The brief ends by documenting that where women lack access to legal abortion services, there is an increased rate of illegal and unsafe abortions, creating risks to women’s health.

This spring students have the chance to continue on with their projects or work on new ones, including: Supporting a Gender Narrative within the Palestinian Conflict, Criminalization of Sex Work Research and Violence Against Women Dossier: Regional and International Standards with a focus on Africa.