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Gunwant Gill

## IHRP Internship Final Report

This past summer I had the great pleasure of interning at Human Rights Watch (HRW) in Washington, D.C. I sought a legal internship at HRW in the hopes of using my legal skills to influence public policy, to participate in human rights advocacy, and to experience working at an international human rights NGO. My experience working in the counter-terrorism division did not disappoint and I was left with a profound sense of professional satisfaction by the end of my internship.

As a legal intern in the counter-terrorism division, my work included legal research and human rights advocacy by way of assistance in HRW reports, and correspondence with policy makers. Being in the political hub that is Washington, DC allowed me to experience the interplay between NGOs, politicians and lawyers first hand. I also had the opportunity to immerse myself in policy discussion by attending international law events and speaker series on a regular basis.

While I gained a greater appreciation for the vital work that HRW undertakes, I also realized how frustrating the attempt to advance policy issues in an expeditious manner can be. I came to recognize the many complexities of NGO advocacy such as the level of coordination required amongst key NGOs (i.e. HRW, American Civil Liberties Union, Human Rights First, etc.) when it comes to policy reform initiatives.

I was given the opportunity to undertake several substantive projects during my time with HRW. The counterterrorism division is involved, in part, in monitoring and reporting on the progress of the rule of law in Afghanistan. I assisted in examining whether criminal trials presently underway in Afghanistan are in accordance with the respective Afghan and international due process law. I thoroughly enjoyed undertaking such a two tier level of analysis and developed, in the process, a comprehensive understanding of the progress (or lack thereof) of basic legal rights in Afghanistan. I also assisted in advocacy efforts on behalf of former Guantanamo Bay detainees seeking resettlement in foreign countries; the opportunity to promote the interests of disadvantaged individuals in collaboration with their lawyer was particularly rewarding.

The majority of my work centered on the HRW Report, "Getting Away with Torture – The Bush Administration and the Mistreatment of Detainees" (<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/us0711webwcover.pdf>). The report, which is several years in the making, calls for the criminal investigations of former senior Bush administration officials, for practices such as "waterboarding," the CIA rendition program, and the torture of detainees at Guantanamo Bay. Tasked with bolstering the legal arguments advanced in the report, I examined the federal criminal laws under which administration officials could be charged and explored means by which the statute of limitations for such crimes could be extended. Furthermore, I considered the applicability of conspiracy charges against the Department of Justice lawyers that crafted the 'torture memos.' With little background in US federal criminal law, I found such tasks particularly challenging

but a few late nights at the Georgetown Law library quickly brought me up to speed. The report was released during my final week with HRW and I was able to witness the tremendous coordination involved in the media strategy for such a report. Furthermore, seeing the report in hard copy and getting the chance to deliver it to the US Attorney General, Eric Holder's Office gave me a taste of the immense personal satisfaction that comes from undertaking such meaningful work.

I had the great privilege of learning from and working with senior counsel at HRW including Ms. Andrea Prasow. The project feedback she provided and the opportunity to be actively involved in her work was critical to my learning experience. The fellow interns at HRW were very welcoming and a great source of support during my internship. I come away from the experience with many memories and great friendships. I want to thank the IHRP and HRW for allowing me to participate in such a worthwhile personal and professional endeavor.

