

2011 IHRP Internship Report – Sonja Pavic
International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (Arusha, Tanzania)

I spent two and a half months this summer in Arusha, Tanzania interning at the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) for the Office of the Prosecutor. I have dreamt about working at one of the UN tribunals since I was in junior high, so the opportunity was a dream come true for me. The ICTR is an ad-hoc international tribunal established after the Rwandan genocide to prosecute crimes committed by high level members of the government and armed forces during the genocide. Now in its final few years of operation, the ICTR is attempting to complete the prosecution of outstanding cases and close up proceedings. I felt grateful that I was able to be among one of the last few batches of interns at the tribunal during what was certainly an exciting and busy period of its long lifetime.

I was assigned to the “Government II” case, formally known as *Prosecutor v. Bizimungu et al.*, which was now in the Appeals and Legal Advisory Division of the court. The Government II case is a large, multi-accused case charging four key ministers of the Interim Government with various crimes against humanity. The trial proceedings finished earlier in the summer and the judgment was due to come out at the end of August (though recently it has been extended to later in September). Thus, I was helping my team with various aspects of the Appeals Readiness Report.

I worked on five major assignments throughout my internship, four were directly for my team and one was for OTP more generally. One of the most time-consuming projects, which made up the first four weeks of my internship, involved a comprehensive disclosure project in preparation for the appeal of our case. I was responsible for completing a massive grid that contained information regarding all of the materials the Prosecution disclosed relating to witnesses who testified in our case. Every single disclosure had to be documented, with all of the correct citations, a short description, and other information the team and myself decided was relevant. I had to track down and sort through hundreds of documents, many of which involved a scavenger hunt through various UN databases, in order to organize all of the disclosure. I then had to print off and index all of the various documents, including witness statements, witness information sheets, and transcripts. This task required me to rapidly become familiar with the format and content of different types of court documents and the way that disclosure works in international criminal law. Although sometimes tedious, the task really highlighted how critical disclosure is, particularly when you have a case that has gone on for more than a decade and involves four accused. Often, on appeal, disclosure can make or break a case.

My next major assignment required a completely different skill set and was extremely interesting content-wise for me. I had to write a summary and comparative analysis of three key expert witnesses such that our team could better understand how the expert evidence did or did not help one of the accused in our case. This required me to go through all of the testimonies and expert

reports of those witnesses and determine what parts of their theories were undermined in cross-examination. This was a terrific assignment because it taught me an enormous amount about the specifics of the genocide and the major issues that are in contention regarding the details of events.

For the last two weeks of my internship, I researched specific issues that had come up in preparation for our appeal. I wrote a memo on the admissibility and probative value of pre-trial statements made by the Accused, which helped my team construct a strong argument for why a pre-trial statement an accused made to the police should be given weight in the proceedings. I also wrote a memo on adjudicated facts and the exclusion of evidence. This required me to search through and review all of the decisions in our case which related to these two issues.

The final assignment I was responsible for, which I was assigned half-way through my internship as an ongoing task, was given to me by the Chief of Appeals. I became responsible for writing daily summaries of all of the decisions and motions filed, which I then sent out to the Prosecutor and all Senior Attorneys. Every morning, I would search through all the documents that were filed and summarize important updates in court proceedings. Some of these filings were in French so I had to become comfortable with using my bilingual skills on a daily basis. I really enjoyed this assignment because it required me to stay updated on what was happening in the tribunal and how all of the cases were progressing.

One of the highlights of my internship was working with an incredible, diverse team of lawyers from around the world. In particular, I felt lucky to be under the supervision of George Mugwanya, who was the Senior Attorney on the case and has been working at the court for a very long time. He made me feel as though I was truly apart of the team and had valuable skills to contribute. I was included in very interesting discussions on complex legal issues and always asked for my opinion and feedback. In addition, meeting and speaking with the Chief of Prosecution was fascinating and helped me come closer to understanding what a career in international criminal law looks like on the ground. It truly enriched my experience that staff lawyers were always willing to share their experiences and knowledge with me.

I also really enjoyed being in court at the Prosecution table and observing an ongoing trial, *Prosecutor v. Ngirabatware*. This allowed me to see how international criminal tribunals actually operate and the different styles that oral advocacy can take.

Aside from working at the court, I really loved living in Tanzania. The lifestyle and people in East Africa are extremely special, and it was a great experience to be immersed in Tanzanian daily life. I had the opportunity to climb Mount Kilimanjaro with a group of ICTR interns, to go on safari through the Serengeti and N'gongoro crater, and lounge on beaches in Zanzibar. However, by far one of the most special trips I took was to Rwanda, a country that I had spent my summer learning about, but had never before stepped foot on.

Overall, I really enjoyed and benefitted from my internship at the UNICTR, and the experience has helped me come closer to understanding what shape I would like my human rights career to take. I hope one day to work in the field of international criminal or human rights law and this internship has been a great gateway to that goal. I am extremely grateful to the IHRP for facilitating this opportunity.



