Call for Applications

2014-2015 Georgetown Law Human Rights Institute

Human Rights Fact-Finding Project

Detention of Migrant Children in the U.S.

The Human Rights Institute (HRI) seeks applicants for its 2014-2015 Fact-Finding Project, which will focus on the detention of migrant children in the United States. Applications are due by 11:59 p.m. on March 19.

This year, the US federal government expects to detain as many as 60,000 unaccompanied migrant children. While the majority of these children will be apprehended at the border, an estimated 1,000 will be detained after some contact with the adult criminal justice system or the juvenile justice system – some through programs that give local law enforcement officials authority to participate in immigration enforcement. Children detained at the border or internally may be detained for months, some in secure facilities that contract with the federal government, many others in shelters or similar facilities. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and other international bodies have said that children should not be detained on the basis of their immigration status. How is it that so many children are detained by the federal government? What happens to children when they are detained – how long are they held and in what conditions? Do US laws and policies comply with international human rights law? How could they be changed to better protect the rights of migrant children?

The project topic was selected through a close collaboration of students in the Human Rights Action/Amnesty International Fact-Finding Committee and the Human Rights Institute.

Students who are selected to participate in the HRI Fact-Finding Project will manage all aspects of an investigation that answers these questions. Students will develop a research project in close consultation with top human rights and migration law experts; plan and carry out a fact-finding mission during Week One of 2015; and then return to the Law Center to draft a major research report with legal and policy recommendations. In the past, after releasing their reports, students in the Fact-Finding Project have presented findings and recommendations to Congressional committees and drafted legislative language, briefed staff at the White House National Security Council, and submitted testimony before United Nations Special Rapporteurs.

Students selected for the 2014-2015 Fact-Finding Project will be required to enroll in a year-long practicum seminar that HRI coordinates. Through this course, students will gain the substantive
background and skills needed to carry out all aspects of the work. In the fall, the seminar will cover the substantive law and policy relating to this subject, as well as human rights fact-finding skills and methodology. In January 2015, during ‘Week One,’ the group will travel to conduct interviews on this subject. Trip expenses will be covered by HRI. In the spring, students will draft and publish a report; there will be regular seminar meetings in the spring to guide students through this process. Students will be expected to have their own meetings through the academic year. Over the year, students will be expected to devote an additional 110 hours outside of class to this project, in addition to the time spent working during Week One. Courses such as International Law I, International Human Rights Law, and Immigration Law and Policy might prove helpful to participants in the project, but are not required. Students may not concurrently enroll in this practicum course and a clinic (except Street Law) or another practicum course. Students may, however, concurrently enroll in this practicum course and an externship.

Interested students should send a statement of interest, a resume and a writing sample to Dash/Muse Fellow Ian Kysel (imk6@law.georgetown.edu) by 11:59 p.m. on Wednesday, March 19, 2014 and be available for an interview at a time to be determined on Friday, March 21, 2014.

Criteria to be considered include but are not limited to: a demonstrated commitment to human rights; experience interviewing or working with individuals affected by human rights violations; ability to work independently, in a group and to complete complicated tasks on a deadline; good writing abilities; and foreign language skills, especially Spanish. Additional information is available at www.humanrightsinstitute.net.