TO: Junsen Ohno, International Programs Administrator  
FROM: Hannah Thompson-Garner, Legal Research Intern  
RE: Summer 2019 – International Commission of Jurists Internship

Location & Dates of Internship

Nairobi, Kenya  
Start: June 3rd, 2019  
End: July 26th, 2019

Supervisor:

Elsy Sainna, Deputy Executive Director – ICJ Kenya  
Email: elsy.sainna@icj-kenya.org

About ICJ - Kenya

ICJ-Kenya is a non-profit, member-based organization affiliated with the International Commission of Jurists – Geneva, though it operates autonomously. ICJ-Kenya was founded in 1959 and is the oldest human rights organization in Kenya. ICJ-Kenya works to promote justice and a fair legal system in Kenya, as well as works to promote human rights throughout the East African region. ICJ-Kenya is organized into five programs that each have its own staff; however, staff will often work in other programs, if necessary, or if a unique skillset or set of expertise is needed. In addition to a Communications office and an Administrative office, the five programs are: Human Rights; Governance; Access to Justice; International Justice; and The Closing of Civic Space.

ICJ - Kenya Office Information

Internship duration varies between 8 to 10 weeks during the summer. Interns typically choose which program they wish to work with; however, upon arrival, if an intern becomes interested in a project conducted by another program the intern may work with multiple programs. The intern will be primarily supervised by their program director, and will work alongside fellow interns, typically recruited from inside Kenya, as well as alongside legal researchers, and program associates. Staff is a mix of both men and women. During the summer of 2019, ICJ-Kenya experienced a change in leadership with a new Executive Director. ICJ-Kenya also moved office locations, relocating to the Karen neighborhood, a leafy, upscale suburb of Nairobi.

Work attire is business professional. Suits for both men and women are acceptable, as are professional separates, such as button-ups and blouses, sweaters and cardigans, slacks and dress pants, skirts, and work-appropriate dresses. Work-appropriate flats are acceptable for women. Kenya is a conservative country, women should be mindful of necklines, open-backs, and skirt lengths. Casual Fridays are implemented; jeans are acceptable, though t-shirts are not allowed. Layers are recommended, as Kenya is in its winter season during June, July, and August.

Office hours are from 8 am to 5 pm. Interns are expected to arrive at the office between 8 to 8:30 am. Lunch is served at 1 pm. Coworkers will typically either eat with others at an outside table or will eat at their desks. The office has a full kitchen with a fridge where food may be stored, if an intern chooses not to partake in meals provided. Lunches are $12 a month. The Karen office is not in close proximity to restaurants or convenience stores, so it is recommended that interns participate in the office lunch program. Vegetarian and vegan options are available.
Lodging is available within walking distance to the office. I opted to stay at an Airbnb twenty minutes walking distance away from the new Karen office. Transportation in Nairobi can be difficult due to traffic and unmarked busses. Matatus are the local transportation method of choice, however, for those unfamiliar with the neighborhoods of Nairobi and with Kiswahili, this method may be difficult, and at times dangerous. Uber and other various taxi services are available, as are busses that run on app-based systems.

Business is conducted similar to the US. However, timekeeping is more relaxed in Kenya, and punctuality is not as rigidly upheld for meeting times. Greetings and small talk are important to the office setting, and to foster a sense of comradery between coworkers. Additionally, spontaneous meetings outside the office are common and should be expected. Transportation to and from the office for meetings will be provided.

**Substantive Work**

It is recommended that an intern research the projects ICJ-Kenya is currently working on, as well as the projects each program as completed, to get a feel for which program will be a good fit for them and their interests. Interns are also encouraged to engage in personal projects that interest them while at ICJ-Kenya. Interns are also encouraged to speak up if they discover a project already in place within a different program if they would like to participate.

During my time with ICJ-Kenya, I worked within the Governance program. I went to meetings that discussed the following, among others: effective governance of the rapidly growing extractive sector in Kenya; the freedom to convene and protest in public spaces; possible reforms to the 2010 Kenyan Constitution; and the effectiveness of the Auditor General’s Office. I also aided in the facilitation of a training session on access to information, as well as helped facilitate an international conference on police reforms. ICJ-Kenya hosts the Annual Jurists Conference, and each program takes turns facilitating the conference. The Governance program is in charge of the conference this year, thus, I also assisted in its organization. Additionally, interns will be expected to conduct legal research and write legal memos or other quick write-ups on a variety of topics. For a personal project, I wrote an editorial article on the connection between human rights and environmental rights, published on ICJ-Kenya’s website.

**Kenya: Information to Know**

Before arrival, interns should familiarize themselves with the Kenyan constitution, with the country’s election processes, and with a general overview of ethnic conflicts, gender struggles, and international issues afflicting Kenya. These key issues were often talked about in the office and experienced generally discussed with friends and acquaintances outside the office. This knowledge will also inform work within the office. The intern should also take initiative in researching other topics of interest relevant to ICJ-Kenya in order to be a useful and creative employee.

Outside of the office, interns should maintain an awareness of their surroundings at all times and avoid walking alone at night. Traffic in Kenya often does not yield to pedestrians, be vigilant while crossing streets. Kenya is a relatively safe country for foreigners, however, theft is common. Do not leave valuables unattended in public settings, do not hang backpacks/purses off of chairs if you cannot see them, and do not carelessly display a phone, wallet, or handbag in the open while in a car with an open window.

Most people in Nairobi speak at least some level of English, it will not be difficult to communicate with people. However, Kenyans are typically delighted when visitors greet them and speak simple phrases in Kiswahili. Female interns should be prepared for some level of harassment from men. Men may attempt to speak to women on the street, may say derogatory phrases while walking by, or may attempt to ask women out on a date. A firm reply of ‘no,’ no acknowledgement, or walking in groups will deter such harassment. This should not deter female interns from exploring Nairobi and the rest of Kenya, however, mental preparation and additional awareness should be implemented at all times. If interns are at all concerned for their safety, or have questions about navigating Nairobi in general, they should always seek advice out from a coworker, who will likely be more than happy to assist you. It is important to note that I experienced zero levels of discomfort or harassment while at work, and that such behavior will not be tolerated, according to the sexual harassment policies in place at ICJ-Kenya.

For housing, I recommend living close to the Karen neighborhood, as transit times are long and arduous due to Nairobi’s level of traffic and difficult-to-navigate matatu (bus) system. Most people at the office discourage interns from using matatus. I used Uber and the privately-owned bus app, SWIVEL, to move around the city on my own. I used matatus when I was traveling with locals familiar with the system. To travel outside of Nairobi, tour buses, hired drivers, trains, and rental cars are available.
Pre-Internship Checklist

- Purchase plane ticket
- Book housing
- Obtain and complete paperwork from Junsen
- Complete Seattle University’s paperwork for study abroad students
- Contact ICJ-Kenya to determine your start and end dates
- Purchase travel insurance
- Obtain medications and immunizations, Kenya requires the yellow fever vaccine
- Notify your bank
- Register your trip with the State Department
- Apply online for your Kenyan visa and bring a printed copy with you to the airport
- Make copies of your passport and visa. Have a copy of your identity documents and visa on you at all times while in Kenya
- Research safety precautions according to your gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity
- Contact past interns with any additional questions you may have
- Set up a WhatsApp account, if you don’t already have one

Kenya is a beautiful and fun country to visit! I recommend researching places beforehand you know you would like to visit while there, as time moves quickly once you begin your internship. Contact me if you have any questions.