

2018 International Fellowship – Tunisia

“International Fellows are the backbone of the ILF’s success in post-conflict and transitioning countries. They work side by side with our local lawyers, helping teach them to think differently, to do more, and, beyond the skills training, inspire them and teach them that they are not alone in the work that they do.”

~Jennifer Smith, ILF Executive Director

The International Legal Foundation is seeking experienced criminal justice system lawyers to take part in its groundbreaking International Fellows Program in 2018 and 2019.

The ILF is a not-for-profit organization created for the purpose of establishing public defender systems in post-conflict and transitioning countries. The ILF operates on the belief that indigent representation is crucial to a functioning criminal justice system, and a functioning criminal justice system is crucial to long term rule of law development. Without defense lawyers to ensure that judges, prosecutors and police officers follow the law, reform and reconstruction of the justice system is impossible. By fighting against arbitrary detention, public defenders are often the first line of protection against human rights violations. For 15 years, the ILF has focused solely on providing criminal defense services to the poor, first in Rwanda, now in Afghanistan, Nepal, the West Bank, Tunisia and Myanmar.

Since 2001, over 60 Fellows from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand have helped transform the role of local lawyers in these countries from passive participants in the criminal justice system to proactive advocates for their clients. As a direct result, clients languishing in detention have been released and many innocent have been acquitted. Fellows have influenced judges to change policies and practices from the bench, and have helped win landmark legal victories in court that have improved the justice systems of all countries in which the ILF works.

International Fellows are lawyers—public or private defense attorneys, prosecutors, and judges—with at least five years of criminal justice sector experience, and experience supervising and/or training other lawyers, who volunteer to work and live abroad in three-month assignments (shorter or longer assignments considered on a case-by-case basis). Fellows mentor our local staff attorneys and management staff day-in and day-out to help them develop the knowledge and skills necessary to ensure meaningful access to quality defense services for the indigent accused. The work may include assisting the staff lawyers as they visit clients in jail, write motions, make court appearances, and conduct investigation, or assisting the local management team to maximize their efficiency and impact, or meeting with government officials, other NGOs, and donor representatives to further the ILF’s in-country work. Each ILF program is unique in its cultural context, current stage of development, and current International Fellow needs.

Tunisia

Openings throughout 2018 and 2019

ILF-Tunisia was founded in late 2014. We currently have one office in Tunis with one full-time local consultant lawyer.. Tunisian law provides the right to counsel for the indigent accused, yet Tunisia faces challenges in implementing this right. The government legal aid system only provides for appointment of counsel in felony and juvenile cases, and lawyers' access to detainees is limited during the critical early stages of the criminal justice process. Appointed lawyers are often newly admitted to the Bar and rarely have sufficient training or experience. As a result, defense lawyers are usually passive, and the accused are vulnerable to arbitrary and illegal pretrial detention, coerced confessions, torture and wrongful convictions.

ILF-Tunisia has launched a new initiative in the second half of 2018 which will promote the involvement of women in the legal profession as well as improve outcomes for women who are accused of crimes in the Greater Tunis area. This fall, the ILF will welcome two women from the Tunisian bar to work side-by-side with our Senior Consultant-Lawyer and train with our international fellows. The program will allow the two lawyers to spend five months developing excellent written and oral trial skills while making a direct impact on vulnerable communities.

The ILF's Tunisia fellows will mentor the ILF's three Tunisian lawyers, day-in and day-out, case-by-case, incrementally improving their skill and ability. The work includes closely supervising staff lawyers as they visit clients in jail, write motions, make court appearances, and conduct investigations. Fellows may also help plan and execute trainings with justice sector stakeholders, as well as participate in meetings with government officials, other organizations, and donor countries involved in rule of law projects as representatives of the ILF. Fellows will also be involved in research and rights awareness projects. Additionally, fellows should work to develop the skills and capacity of other support staff in the office, including the paralegal, office administrator and program assistant. Fellows may be asked to assist in implementing institutional policies and procedures to make the Tunisia office a high-functioning, efficient and effective public defender office, and to contribute to our efforts to expand the office to cities outside of Tunis.

French and/or Arabic language skills are not required but are strongly preferred.

For more information about the ILF, ILF-Tunisia, and this fellowship opportunity, contact Betsy Walters at (212) 608-1188 or bwalters@theilf.org. To apply, please send a thoughtful cover letter and resume to Nicole Taylor at fellows@theilf.org.