

## **Death Penalty Sentencing Mitigation Clinic**

The Human Rights Centre Clinic will be running a death penalty sentencing mitigation clinic this academic year in partnership with [Reprive](#), which is a London-based human rights organization that provides free legal and investigative support to those facing execution and those victimized by states' counter-terror polices. The death penalty is viewed by many human rights entities worldwide as a cruel, inhumane and degrading response to crime. The UN General Assembly has called for an end to the death penalty, arguing that it violates the principle that states must recognise the right to life. Reprive assists on death penalty cases worldwide, contributing to investigations and working to save clients from execution through a combination of legal advocacy and public pressure.

The sentencing mitigation process is focused on eliciting evidence about an individual accused of a crime through a comprehensive life history investigation. Sentencing mitigation evidence is used by the defense to present evidence about why their client shouldn't receive the death penalty. This process can reveal family histories of trauma, violence, and mental illness, often-hidden histories of violence, undiagnosed mental illness and developmental disabilities. This evidence is used to combat the claims that the individual deserves the worst kind of punishment, and is widely recognized as crucial to the death penalty process; in fact, the United States Supreme Court ruled that mitigation evidence is *required* in death penalty cases.

Over the course of the year, the sentencing mitigation clinic team will work with Dr. Alexandra Cox from the Department of Sociology, who is also a sentencing mitigation specialist, to be trained in obtaining and analyzing life history records, documents pertinent to a life history investigation, identifying witnesses and preparing for witness investigations, conducting reports on the countries where individuals are facing the death penalty, and working with local attorneys and consulates to provide assistance to the accused.

### **Time Commitment**

The clinic will run during the Autumn, Spring and Summer terms. Students will not be expected to participate during the vacations or during the examination period.

Members of the team will be trained by Dr. Alexandra Cox in conjunction with lawyers from Reprive. They will meet in person at least monthly during term time at a mutually agreed-upon time, and will communicate through regular in-person team meetings, phone calls, and Skype during the rest of the year.

Students participating in the clinic will require total commitment of approximately 40 hours of work over the course of three terms in addition to 10 hours of contact time through meetings and seminars.

### **Duties**

Students will be assigned tasks in conjunction with the cases. These tasks will include:

- Requesting and obtaining client records, including medical, educational, prison/jail, and military records.
- Digesting and analyzing records.
- Researching and investigating witnesses.
- Researching and investigating facts related to the criminal case.
- Interviewing witnesses.
- Conducting investigations about conditions of confinement, arrest, and detention in the countries where clients are detained.
- Research which feeds into Reprieve's advocacy with the home state or detaining state in relation to the various cases. For example, before trial research to inform representations by the home state executive to the detaining state executive against seeking the death penalty at trial or, during the judicial process, research to inform an intervention by the home state by way of amicus brief.
- Social science research connecting to the specific context, pathways and outcomes of the individual's route to the crime. This could include information about age and offending, gender and offending, but also the broader socio-structural contexts of offending (exposure to abuse and violence, experiences in war).
- Research about the preparation and filing of Inter-American Commission complaints.
- Research relating to specific country-level campaigns, e.g. ending the death penalty against young people in Saudi Arabia.

### **Skills we are looking for**

- Strong commitment to human rights and the prevention of the application of the death penalty.
- Strong research and writing skills.
- Willingness to respect client and case confidentiality.
- Language skills: fluency in Urdu, Bengali, German and/or Italian would be beneficial for this clinic.

### **To apply:**

Please send a CV and cover letter to the attention of Alexandra Cox at [Alexandra.cox@essex.ac.uk](mailto:Alexandra.cox@essex.ac.uk) by October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018.