

**FULL-TIME PUBLIC INTEREST FELLOWSHIP
PROGRAMME & ADVOCACY
ISHR (New York and/or Geneva)**

Dates: 01 September – 31 August or to be discussed

Length: 12 months or to be discussed

Work percentage: Full-time (37.5 hours/week) or to be discussed

Location: in person in New York (United-States) and/or Geneva (Switzerland)

Reports to: Programme Officers/Managers and Directors

Applications deadline: to be discussed

Host organization: [International Service for Human Rights \(ISHR\)](https://www.ishr.ch/)

ABOUT ISHR

The International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) is an independent, non-profit organization with offices in Geneva, New York and Abidjan. We support and act in solidarity with human rights defenders in their work for freedom, dignity, equality, justice and other fundamental values at the international, regional and national levels. Our approach to supporting human rights work is based on three core pillars: **(1) Supporting human rights defenders; (2) Promoting rights and accountability; and (3) Strengthening human rights laws and systems.**

The fellowship would provide hands-on experience working for an international non-governmental organization (NGO) as well as the opportunity to contribute to our work supporting human rights defenders, strengthening human rights systems, building and leading human rights coalitions, and responding to significant and systemic human rights concerns.

The work of human rights defenders is essential to promote and protect human rights and the rule of law. Our theory of change is founded on a proven formula, supported by almost 40 years of research, frontline experience and a track record of impact: that the engagement of human rights defenders- the essential change agents, with international and regional human rights laws and systems- the powerful levers, create national level change.

We prioritize several groups of human rights defenders for particular attention, namely women human rights defenders, LGBTQIA+ defenders, those working on corporate accountability, defenders working in restrictive environments, defenders working against racism, and defenders working on migrant and refugee rights. We also work to prevent and address reprisals against those engaging in the regional and international human rights systems.

FELLOWSHIP POSITION

ISHR has a long-standing history of hosting legal fellows. We immensely value the contribution of our fellows to the team and our work. We have also received very positive feedback from past fellows on the role of the fellowship in their legal careers. Our Fellows are fully integrated as part of the teams, which provides a comprehensive understanding of the work of an international human rights NGO. Beyond ISHR, fellows also have ample opportunities to engage with human rights defenders, diplomats, UN staff and NGO professionals.

The Fellow would be part of the Geneva and/or New York teams and have the opportunity to collaborate with ISHR staff in all locations including the Abidjan office. This year-long, full-time (37.5 hours per week) in-person fellowship places the Fellow under the supervision of staff attorneys and the support of Fellowship Coordinators in both offices, while working closely with the legal and other teams to contribute to efforts supporting human rights defenders, strengthening human rights systems, building and leading human rights coalitions, and responding to significant and systemic situations of concern.

In a year's work with ISHR, the Fellow will gain experience monitoring a number of deliberations and negotiations at the United Nations and advocating in those fora in line with ISHR's mandate and priorities. Working in a small team, the Fellow will have the opportunity to learn at close hand what it means to work for an international human rights advocacy organization. The Fellow will also have the opportunity to collaborate with ISHR staff in all locations and gain hands-on experience on the application of international human rights law in a multilateral human rights system, including advocacy on normative and policy advances for the protection of human rights defenders.

The Fellow will be involved in a number of research and advocacy projects relating to our areas of work. These could include, for example, the production of NGO reports to international and regional human rights mechanisms, drafting amicus briefs to treaty bodies or international, regional or national courts, drafting communications to human rights experts, or designing and carrying out advocacy campaigns at the General Assembly, the ECOSOC Committee on NGOs, the Human Rights Council as well as contributing to our work on capacity development and enhancing legislative protection of defenders.

As part of this work, we would involve the Fellow in meetings with external stakeholders—including diplomats, UN officials, NGOs—as well as internal strategy meetings, with the goal that, through this experience at ISHR, the Fellow would acquire a strong understanding of how different stakeholders engage and seek to influence key actors in the international human rights system.

During this year at ISHR, the Fellow would also be able to avail of the following staff benefits:

- 25 days paid annual leave;
- Office closure between Christmas and New Year;
- 11 paid holidays;
- Paid sick leave;
- Flexible work arrangements.

KEY TASKS

Through a combination of research and analysis, advocacy, and capacity building, the Fellow will work closely with the ISHR program staff in all locations, contributing to our work supporting human rights defenders, strengthening human rights systems, building and leading human rights coalitions, and responding to significant and systemic situations of concern.

Key tasks may include:

- Supporting legal counsel in preparing submissions to national, regional and international human rights mechanisms and courts;
- Representing ISHR at meetings at UN headquarters and in coalitions with other human rights NGOs;
- Assisting with research in relation to submissions for international human rights mechanisms, including Special Procedures, the Universal Periodic Review and the UN treaty bodies;
- Assisting with ISHR's training and advocacy support to human rights defenders and networks globally;

- Providing support to the key programme staff in the implementation of project activities, across ISHR's strategic programme areas;
- Reviewing and providing inputs to relevant ISHR reports, handbook for research, related to specific human rights issues and UN mechanisms;
- Researching and compiling texts, UN resolutions, laws or reports on specific human rights topics in order to supplement ISHR research and advocacy;
- Monitoring and reporting on UN and regional human rights meetings, including the UN Human Rights Council, Treaty Body sessions and Universal Periodic Review.

TRAINING AND OPPORTUNITIES

Our Fellows are fully included as part of the team, including in staff meetings, which provide a comprehensive understanding of the work of an international human rights NGO. Fellows also have opportunities to interact and network with human rights defenders, diplomats or other UN and NGO professionals both at the United Nations and at ISHR's office (or remotely) during meetings.

Where appropriate or necessary for their work, ISHR staff will provide practical sessions and guidance, for example, on monitoring UN mechanisms, drafting reports and advocacy documents, utilizing communications technologies, etc.

REQUIREMENTS

The successful Fellow must:

- Be a graduate/student;
- Be eligible to apply for a third-party provided financial support covering the fellowship salary, through their school and/or another sponsoring institution;
- Have a strong interest in human rights and social change;
- Have strong drafting and research skills;
- Be flexible and self-motivated;
- Be able to work as a member of an international and multicultural team and willing to participate in a variety of tasks, as required;
- Be detail-oriented and attentive to nuance, in particular in diplomatic environments;
- Be motivated, autonomous and a self-starter, and comfortable occasionally working with limited supervision;
- Have an **excellent level of written and spoken English**. Knowledge of official UN languages, especially Arabic, Chinese, French or Spanish is an advantage;
- Interest or background, including activism in, corporate accountability, women's rights, and/or LGBTQIA+ rights.

FELLOWSHIP MODALITIES

Fellow must be fully funded by a scholarship provided by a third party for the entire duration (12 months or more) of their fellowship.

The fellowship is expected to be a full-time (37.5 hours per week) position and to take place in person in New York and / or Geneva office as primary location. A dual location arrangement, with the fellowship split between New York and Geneva, may be considered if it serves both the Fellow's best interests and the organization's need.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

ISHR is firmly committed to having a diverse team and to the principle of equal employment opportunity. ISHR's policy is to practice fair and non-discriminatory recruitment and selection procedures and strive for diverse, international and multicultural personnel. We welcome all kinds of diversity.

Applications are encouraged from all qualified candidates without distinction including on grounds of race, colour, national origin, age, religion, disability status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression or sex characteristics, pregnancy, genetic information, protected veteran status, socio-economic status, or any other characteristic protected by law.

We particularly welcome applications from systematically, historically and/or traditionally discriminated against under-represented groups, including women, persons of colour, LGBTIQIA+ persons candidates, persons with disabilities and other groups.

To request reasonable accommodation to participate in the job application or interview process, please contact ISHR's Human Resources department at hr@ishr.ch.

HOW TO APPLY

Interested candidates should apply by sending **a cover letter, a CV (no profile picture) and a writing sample** [here](#). In their cover letter, candidates should demonstrate their commitment to human rights and social change.

Application deadline: 15 December 2026. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

Please kindly note that due to the high volume of applications, only short-listed candidates will be contacted. All applications will be handled in accordance with [ISHR's Privacy Policy](#).

SCOPE OF HUMAN RIGHTS RELATED AREAS OF WORK FOR PROSPECTIVE ISHR FELLOWS (New York and/or Geneva)

Depending on the needs of [International Service for Human Rights \(ISHR\)](#) and the Fellow's experience and interests, opportunities may involve work across the following areas:

TYPES OF WORK

- Research and analysis on international and regional human rights law, policy and practice
- Advocacy and policy engagement with the United Nations, regional human rights systems, States and other relevant stakeholders
- Monitoring and reporting on developments at UN and regional human rights bodies and mechanisms
- Legal research and support for submissions to national, regional and international human rights mechanisms and courts
- Support on strategic litigation and other forms of legal advocacy
- Drafting of advocacy materials, legal submissions, policy briefs, reports, statements and communications
- Support for meetings, consultations, events and engagement with human rights defenders and civil society partners
- Communications and public advocacy on human rights issues

UN AND REGIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS

Work may involve engagement with:

- UN Human Rights Council
- UN General Assembly and other relevant UN bodies
- UN Special Procedures
- UN Treaty Bodies
- Universal Periodic Review
- Regional human rights mechanisms, including the African, Inter-American and European human rights systems
- National, regional and international courts and other accountability mechanisms

THEMATIC AREAS

Potential areas of work include:

- Protection and recognition of human rights defenders
- Civil society space, freedom of association and peaceful assembly
- Civil society participation in international and regional human rights systems
- Protection against intimidation and reprisals for cooperation with human rights mechanisms
- Gender equality and the rights of women human rights defenders
- Racial justice and anti-racism
- LGBTQIA+ rights and the protection of LGBTQIA+ human rights defenders
- Business and human rights and corporate accountability
- Accountability for human rights violations
- Strengthening international and regional human rights laws, standards and mechanisms

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Work may involve supporting human rights defenders working:

- In restrictive or repressive environments
- To combat racism and racial discrimination
- To advance gender equality and women's rights
- To protect LGBTQIA+ rights
- On corporate accountability and business and human rights
- To protect civil society space and fundamental freedoms
- To seek accountability for human rights violations

REGIONAL SCOPE

Depending on the position and relevant programme, work may focus on:

- Africa
- Asia
- Latin America and the Caribbean
- Middle East and North Africa
- Global and cross-regional human rights issues

ISHR OFFICES / WORK LOCATIONS

Opportunities may be based in or connected with ISHR's offices in:

- Geneva, Switzerland (headquarters)
- New York, United States
- Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire
