



RSN US-Mexico Fellowship Program

RSN and its Mexican partner organization Sin Fronteras IAP seek law students, recent grads, and volunteer lawyers interested in practical human rights law experience for a minimum of 6 months, to be split between Mexico City, Mexico and New York City, USA.

Fellows receive intensive pre-departure introductory training on relevant practical and substantive material (US-based initiatives, international refugee law) before placement in the field where they will offer counseling, representation, and other assistance to asylum-seekers in Mexico. Fellows come away with valuable experience and skills in case management, client interaction, interviewing, research, writing, and substantive understanding of human rights and refugee law in the context of Central America.

Host information: Refugee Solidarity Network (RSN) is a US-based 501c3 non-profit organization dedicated to protecting refugee rights by developing capacities in key refugee host countries and advancing human rights. Since its founding, RSN has worked on refugee issues in the world's largest host country, Turkey, and more recently participated in activities in partnership with local actors in Bulgaria, Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia and Mexico. RSN's strategically focused programming and participation in global advocacy forums is intended to contribute to broader efforts to improve protection standards for refugees across the globe.

For the last year, RSN has been working with Sin Fronteras IAP, a secular, non-governmental, nonprofit Mexican civil society organization, whose mission is to contribute to the promotion, protection and defense of the human rights of migrants and subjects of international protection, in order to dignify their living conditions through direct attention and advocacy in the public agenda. Founded in 1995 by a group of academics and activists, Sin Fronteras was the first organization in Mexico to work on issues of migration and asylum from a systemic human rights-based perspective, demonstrating the need for an active and participative civil society that promotes and participates in the creation and reform of laws, normative frameworks, and public policies centered on the human rights of migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons.

Program: RSN is recruiting qualified US-based candidates to participate and contribute to Sin Fronteras' legal assistance work, assisting individuals and families navigating UNHCR and Mexican asylum procedures. RSN screens applicants and selects fellows in coordination with Sin Fronteras.

RSN provides selected fellows an extensive introductory, pre-departure training on asylum procedures, relevant domestic and international law, country of origin research, ethical considerations working with refugees, interviewing techniques and the role of interpreters during client interviews. The pre-departure training takes place over one week in New York, although alternate arrangements are sometimes available.

Legal Fellows are expected to commit 30-40 hours per week for a minimum of a 6-month fellowship term, with the possibility of an extension. In exceptional cases, applicants who demonstrate relevant previous experience and appear prepared to make a significant contribution immediately may be accepted for a shorter term.

Legal fellowships are unpaid at this time. Applicants are encouraged to seek and secure outside funding. RSN will support applicants in applications to secure funding and/or school credit. RSN provides advice but cannot offer housing and relocation assistance.

Core Responsibilities:

- Provide direct assistance and/or counseling and guidance to individuals with international protection needs, in accordance with Sin Fronteras IAP's holistic support model;
- Conduct legal research on applicable international standards and case law for situations of forced migration;
- Follow-up and provide other forms of support on individual international protection cases;
- Collaborate in the preparation of reports outlining human rights violations of individuals with international protection needs;
- Prepare briefing documents on country conditions and compliance w/national and international law.

Requirements:

- Educational background in a relevant field, including but not limited to social sciences or law (specialization in human rights, human mobility, international migration), human rights, international relations and/or migration studies;
- Knowledge and understanding of the legal concepts and tools used in the refugee protection context, particularly in the Americas;
- Familiarity with international refugee law, including UNHCR asylum procedures and standards;
- Fluency and writing ability in English and Spanish;
- Excellent analytical and writing skills;
- Ability to work under pressure and to meet deadlines;
- Commitment to respecting personal differences based on factors including but not limited to ethnicity, skin color, religion, gender and sexual orientation;
- Commitment to respecting the confidentiality of clients as well as internal organizational discussions;
- Willingness to take on a wide variety of tasks and responsibilities;
- Ability to take initiative and work well independently while also being able to work collaboratively;
- basic computer skills (Microsoft Office);
- Team spirit, curiosity and openness are valuable assets.

Preferred Skills and Experience:

- Experience with US-based asylum cases,
- Six month's experience in providing direct services to migrants and those seeking international protection, including monitoring of their applications
- Experience developing litigation strategies and advocacy related to migration and international protection
- Experience working with vulnerable people;
- Experience interviewing survivors of trauma or torture;
- Experience working in a non-profit or NGO setting with limited resources.

How to Apply: Applicants are asked to send a resume and a cover letter explaining their background and interest in serving a legal fellowship term with RSN, to fellowship@refugeesolidaritynetwork.org. Please include your last name and "Mexico Fellowship" in the subject line. In your cover letter, please specify clearly the start date by which you would be prepared to commit and the length of time you would be available to serve.

New applications are reviewed periodically and short-listed applicants are contacted for an interview. Legal fellowships are offered on a rolling basis depending on the needs of RSN and Sin Fronteras IAP, and upcoming vacancies.