

David W. Leebron Human Rights Fellowship 2025

Columbia Law School announces the 2024 David W. Leebron Human Rights Fellowship, which honors the Law School's former dean (1996-2004) and his commitment to providing meaningful experiences in human rights law. This fellowship will enable a Columbia Law School graduate to spend one year working in human rights in the U.S. or abroad. **Applications are due on February 23, 2025.**

Terms of the Fellowship

The Leebron Fellowship will be awarded for a one-year term. The fellowship is available to graduates of Columbia Law School who are (1) members of the Class of 2025 pursuing a J.D. or LL.M. degree, including those who will graduate in October 2024 or February or May 2025, or (2) current state or federal judicial clerks whose clerkships will terminate by fall 2025.

The fellowship is designed to enable a Columbia Law School graduate interested in pursuing a career in human rights law to gain practical experience working with a human rights organization. Through this year of practical training, the fellowship aims to provide the graduate with the skills necessary to start or advance a career in the field of human rights law, whether in academic life, in governmental, intergovernmental, or nongovernmental organizations or agencies, or as legal practitioners specializing in human rights work. The fellowship carries a stipend of \$50,000 a year and must begin within five months of graduation or of completion of a clerkship.

Applicants must not have a full-time job or a fellowship, stipend, or other source of funding to work during the time period for which the fellowship is sought.

Qualifying Placements

Host organizations must be engaged in human rights law advocacy. In most cases, these organizations or agencies will be involved in human rights education, monitoring, reporting, litigation, grassroots mobilization, or other forms of advocacy. They may be involved in human rights work in general or in specific areas of the human rights movement such as, but not limited to, women's rights, children's rights, labor rights, refugee rights, humanitarian law, transitional justice, health care, and so on. Most qualifying organizations would identify themselves as part of the broader universal human rights movement, relying on the norms declared in international and regional treaties and declarations. Qualifying hosts may include organizations embracing new and interdisciplinary directions in the human rights movement, such as those following in substantial part a rights-based approach to economic development, humanitarian relief, media, health, or environmental activism. In special circumstances, the fellowship selection committee may accept a proposal for work within a governmental or intergovernmental human rights organization.

Qualifying placements may also include nonprofit organizations in the U.S. at which the majority of the fellow's work will use the international human rights law paradigm to combat domestic social justice issues. Please note: The fellowship selection committee understands that projects and/or host organizations proposed in this application may be tenuous or uncertain prior to an award of funding. The committee will allow changes to the fellow's project or host organization as long as they are within the parameters of the fellowship as outlined in this notice of application.

Fellows must be supervised by a lawyer at the host organization.

Application and Selection Procedure

To apply, please follow the instructions on the next page. Applications are reviewed by a committee of Columbia Law School faculty, administrators, and human rights practitioners. Fellows will be selected by the end of March 2025.

Stipend and Payment Process

Unless their host organizations ask to have the stipend transferred to the organization, fellows are paid by Columbia Law School in monthly installments. Funds are not available before fellows commence work. Stipends are subject to U.S. taxes.

If either of the following circumstances apply to you, please reach out to Rebecca Hinde at rh2523@columbia.edu to discuss the payment schedule PRIOR TO APPLYING:

- *You plan to start your fellowship prior to July 1, 2025.*
- *Your proposed host organization is a U.N. agency.*

Fellowship Contacts

For questions about substantive issues such as fellowship criteria, your statement, or the appropriateness of a reference or prospective host, please contact:

Kerry McLean
Director, Human Rights and Public International Law
km3754@columbia.edu
Please make an appointment on [Simplicity](#)

For questions about submitting your materials, the application timeline, and fellowship payments, please contact:

Rebecca Hinde
Coordinator for Postgraduate Fellowships
rh2523@columbia.edu

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Columbia Law School

Please visit cglink.me/2it/s78692 to upload the following documents. **Applications are due by 11:59 p.m. on February 23, 2025.**

1. Your resume
2. A personal statement (1,000 words maximum) about your relevant experience, interest, and future aspirations with respect to public interest and human rights legal work. The statement should include a discussion of the fellowship's place in your career plans. PLEASE INCLUDE YOUR NAME ON THE DOCUMENT.
3. A project description (3 pages maximum) that includes the following. PLEASE INCLUDE YOUR NAME ON THE DOCUMENT.
 - a. a description of the host and its work in the local and international context.
 - b. a description of your project and its relation to the work of the proposed host organization.
 - c. an estimated budget (to demonstrate feasibility).
4. Your UNOFFICIAL Columbia Law School transcript.
5. A commitment letter from a host organization that demonstrates that it is a qualified employer for purposes of this fellowship and describes the work, training, and supervision that you will receive if the application is successful. If you are a J.D. student, the letter MUST also state*:
 - a. the term of the fellowship as a **full-time one-year position**.
 - b. that **Columbia Law School** will provide funding of **\$50,000 per year**.
 - c. if the host will supplement the stipend with its own funds, **the amount the host will pay you**.
6. One letter of recommendation, preferably from a Columbia Law School faculty member or a supervisor at a relevant organization. If the recommender would prefer, they can email the letter to rh2523@columbia.edu by the application deadline.
7. Identification of two ADDITIONAL persons who could serve as references and their contact information, including their email addresses and phone numbers.

* The American Bar Association requires Columbia Law School to report on any fellowships the Law School awards to its graduating J.D. class. For each fellow, the report must include a host letter that acknowledges the fellowship duration and stipend amount and specifies that the stipend is being provided by Columbia Law School. If the host is supplementing the stipend with its own funds, the letter must state this, with the supplement amount included in the letter. We ask that applicants ensure that their letter includes this information. Thank you.