

RESEARCHER ON US CRIMINAL JUSTICE

New York, Washington DC, Chicago, Los Angeles,
San Francisco

US Program

Description

The US Program of Human Rights Watch (“HRW”) is seeking a highly qualified Researcher on Criminal Justice to investigate, analyze, and advocate against human rights abuses experienced by persons in the US criminal justice system through the media and directly with policymakers. The role of the Researcher may include documenting and advocating against racial injustice in policing; abusive prosecutorial policies; excessively harsh sentencing and post-conviction collateral consequences; pre-conviction confinement including bail policies; drug policies that improperly emphasize criminalization; solitary confinement and other abusive or inhumane prison conditions; and criminal justice policies that have a particularly harsh impact on youth or low-income populations accused of or victimized by crime. The position reports to the Director of the US Program and may be based in one of HRW’s offices in New York, Washington, DC, Chicago, Los Angeles or San Francisco.

Responsibilities:

1. Identify issues or reform opportunities in US criminal justice policy by communicating with a wide range of participants in and

observers of the criminal justice system;

2. Research, document and analyze policies and practices of state and federal criminal justice systems that raise human rights concerns by filing public records requests, accessing public documents, and interviewing persons directly affected (e.g. prisoners and their families, victims of crime) as well as professionals and experts (e.g. defense attorneys, prosecutors, corrections officials, law enforcement officials, and criminal justice policy experts);

3. Make recommendations to the US Program regarding the issues that it should undertake; Develop a plan for strategic research and advocacy projects (other than litigation) to further those issues;

4. Develop and implement advocacy strategies (in collaboration with the Advocacy Director) to change abusive laws, policies, and practices; directly present human rights concerns to government officials, opinion leaders, inter-governmental agencies, and the media;

5. Write accurate, unbiased, comprehensive, and timely reports and other advocacy documents (often including images, audio, video, data analysis, and/or online tools) that include policy recommendations intended to contribute to ending human rights abuses experienced by persons in the criminal justice system;

6. Write op-eds, press releases, briefing memos, statements, testimony and other materials in order to disseminate our research findings and policy recommendations for change;

7. Take initiative to project concerns about criminal justice issues in public debate through prompt responses to queries from the media, public, and colleagues in the criminal justice and human rights community;

8. Work closely with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local human rights organizations to develop opportunities for

our work to enhance and complement their own work;

9. Be prepared and willing to work flexible hours to accommodate developing and urgent events; and

10. Travel domestically and internationally, as required, to conduct research and advocacy.

Qualifications

Education: A US law degree (J.D.) or an advanced degree in US criminal law/policy, journalism, or public policy or a related field is required.

Experience: Minimum five years of relevant experience is required. Relevant experience may include among other things, work as a prosecutor or criminal defense attorney; analysis and advocacy on criminal justice policies for nonprofit advocacy or impact litigation organizations; or work in government relating to criminal justice policy.

Related Skills and Knowledge:

1. Ability to analyze trends and developments in the US criminal justice system so as to develop priorities to focus time and effort on issues of greatest importance or issues that are most capable of being influenced is required.

2. Ability to develop and implement effective and creative research, media outreach, and advocacy strategies is required.

3. Ability to conduct effective and sensitive interviews with a wide range of people, including people arrested or prosecuted, their victims, and government officials is required.

4. Ability to develop advocacy and messaging strategies, including outreach with local media environments and the electronic media is required.

5. Experience working with communities who have suffered civil

or human rights violations in the United States, such as minority and low-income communities, is strongly desirable.

6. Excellent writing and editing skills and dynamic public speaking ability in English are required, including the ability to articulate human rights issues persuasively, particularly with people of differing perspectives and concerns.

7. Strong initiative and follow-through, the capacity to think creatively and strategically, and an entrepreneurial capacity to work effectively and manage projects with minimal oversight and staffing support are required.

8. Strong interpersonal skills and ability to work collaboratively within HRW, as well as with external partners, are required.

9. Ability to multi-task effectively, including having good planning and organizing skills and ability to work under pressure are required.

10. Experience in developing non-courtroom strategies to reform criminal justice policies is desirable.

11. Experience in developing public records requests and in analyzing data so as to inform research findings and policy recommendations is desirable.

12. Ability to think creatively about use of images, audio, video, data, and online tools in the presentation of findings and in advocacy is desirable.

13. Familiarity with and experience working in international human rights in criminal justice contexts is desirable.

Other: Applicants for this position must be willing to travel frequently and be prepared to spend extensive time outside the office doing research or advocacy.

Salary and Benefits: HRW seeks exceptional applicants and offers competitive compensation and employer-paid benefits. HRW will pay reasonable relocation expenses and will

assist employees in obtaining necessary work authorization, if required; citizens of all nationalities are encouraged to apply.

How to Apply

Please submit a cover letter, curriculum vitae, salary requirements, a brief non-legal writing sample (no briefs or legal memos and unedited by others) and three references to usprog_jobs@hrw.org. Please use “**Criminal Justice Researcher Application Ref: USP-15-1077**” as the subject of your email.

Only complete applications will be reviewed and only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.

Equal Opportunity Employer

Human Rights Watch is an equal opportunity employer that does not discriminate in its hiring practices and, in order to build the strongest possible workforce, actively seeks a diverse applicant pool.

About Human Rights Watch

Human Rights Watch is an international human rights monitoring and advocacy organization known for its in-depth investigations, its incisive and timely reporting, its innovative and high-profile advocacy campaigns, and its success in changing the human rights-related policies and practices of influential governments and international institutions.