

Vicki Prais

Human Rights Lawyer | Independent Human Rights Consultant | Visiting Professor of Human Rights
Helping International Organisations and civil society put human rights first

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Internationally experienced human rights lawyer with recognised expertise in the protection of prisoners' rights, prison reform, dignity behind bars, the prohibition of torture and ill-treatment and fair trial issues. I have 27 years of professional experience in International Organizations including the UN, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the British government, civil society organisations and academia. Extensive experience in writing and managing the production of influential policy reports. I have a comprehensive, expert level legal and practical knowledge of international and regional human rights standards and norms on criminal justice and detention. I have in-country experience working in different settings, including Kosovo, Armenia, Ukraine, Ethiopia, Georgia, Thailand, Bangladesh, Canada, and Russia. Very strong understanding of penal related issues obtained through practical visits to different closed institutions in various countries (Canada, Georgia, Japan, the United Kingdom, Spain). In October 2021, I was appointed as a Visiting Professor of Human Rights at the Centre for Human Rights, Birmingham City University (UK). Qualified Solicitor of England and Wales.

SKILLS:

Legal advisory | Advocacy | Legal research & drafting | Project design and development | Training | Capacity sharing | Programme Management | Policy advisory | Public speaking and speechwriting | English (fluent), French (Advanced)

RELEVANT WORK EXPERIENCE

Independent Human Rights consultant, London, September 2019 – present

Independent consultant on international human rights law, with a focus on criminal justice, prisoners' rights, prison reform and the prohibition of torture and ill treatment.

Success in delivering complex legal research, analysis, writing, policy advice and devising training and guidance.

Recent and ongoing projects include:

- **Together against the Death Penalty/*Ensemble contre la peine de mort*** – co-authored a guide to support detention monitors assess conditions of people sentenced to death. (French, forthcoming 2024)
- **European Judicial Training Network** – Trained 38 European prosecutors and judges in November 2023 as part of a 2-day training on *Human and Fundamental Rights in the 21st Century: Dialogue between the national and the European Courts*. I delivered a presentation and workshop session on people in vulnerable situations and the Criminal Law.
- **Council of Europe/Penal Reform International** – *European Prison Rules Guidance Document*, contributor (May 2023).
- **Irish Penal Reform Trust** – co-author, *Maternal Imprisonment in Ireland: A Scoping Study* (March 2023)
- **UN Special Rapporteur on Torture** – supported the UNSRT with ad hoc speechwriting in advance of report launch (February 2023).
- **UN Office on Drugs and Crime (Regional Office, South Asia)** – Training on UN Nelson Mandela Rules to prison healthcare staff, Bangladesh (August 2021 – May 2022; training delivered in May 2022).

Role: International Consultant

As consultant, I was engaged to deliver training on the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the UN Nelson Mandela Rules) to prison healthcare staff in Bangladesh.

Created training materials, facilitated, and delivered training to over 70 prison healthcare officials on theoretical and practical aspects of the UN Nelson Mandela Rules.

- **Council of Europe – The impact of COVID-19 on prison reform priorities in the Council of Europe (June 2021-Jan 2022)**

Role: Consultant

Conducted research and market analysis on the COVID-19 response in prisons in the Council of Europe region and associated human rights concerns. In-depth analysis of information and data in six selected Council of Europe countries based on desk research, information provided by authorities and stakeholder interviews. Preparation of report on the impact of COVID-19 on prison reform priorities, awareness raising materials and detailed recommendations on a human rights approach to tackling COVID-19 within prisons. Presentation of findings to the Council of Europe Secretariat and member states.

- **Penal Reform International –**

Role: Consultant – contributor, *Older persons in detention: a framework for preventive monitoring*, Penal Reform International/Association for the Prevention of Torture (June 2021) and other publications.

- **International Partnership for Human Rights – (2020 to 2023)**

Role: Long term consultant

Author/co-author of various human rights report documenting human rights violations in Russia, Ukraine, Central Asia and the Caucuses. Several publications have included a focus on the rights of people deprived of liberty.

Policy and Programme Manager, Penal Reform International, London, October 2018 – August 2019

- Identified and lead advocacy and policy at the international level (UN, Council of Europe) on the rights of persons deprived of their liberty;
- Undertook research and writing into penal reform issues and prepared briefings, training materials and other publications including the *Global Prison Trends Report 2019* (co-author);
- Developed and maintained relationships and networks with national and international partners and decision-makers;
- Supported and provided technical assistance to PRI staff, partner organisations, national authorities and international stakeholders on criminal justice, penal reform and international human rights law;
- Represented the organisation at conferences, expert meetings and other high-level events;
- Planned and oversaw external communications and the management of publications;
- Managed and coordinated events;
- Managed the work of policy intern.

O'Brien Fellow in Residence, Centre for Human Rights & Legal Pluralism, McGill University, Montreal, Canada, February – June 2018

- Awarded a competitive Fellowship in recognition of my extensive experience as a human rights practitioner;
- Designed and conducted a major desk and empirical research project into the implementation of the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners in Canada. The research included expansive interviews with key stakeholders and drafting a practice-based publication, '*The implementation of the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners in Canada: A Practitioner's Perspective*' (Journal of Human Rights Practice, February 2021).

Associate Tutor, International Human Rights Law, Surrey University, October 2017 – February 2018

- Module Convener for the International Human Rights Law course, which involved preparing the course and teaching and assessing third year law students.

Human Rights Advisor, Prisoners Abroad/seconded to the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), London, September 2014 – September 2017

- Advised staff at Embassies (including Ambassadors), Consulates and FCDO Desk Officers on cases of British Nationals detained overseas on human rights issues, including death penalty cases;
- High level advice on when and why it may be appropriate for the British Government to intervene in a case and how to strategically handle high-profile and high-risk cases;
- Key liaison between Prisoners Abroad and the FCDO;
- Successfully conducted human rights monitoring missions to Ethiopia (April 2015) and Japan (October 2016) to visit detainees and lobby host governments on human rights issues;
- Delivered training to the FCDO and Prisoners Abroad staff on international human rights law.

EARLY CAREER HISTORY¹:

September 2013 – September 2014	Legal Advisor, Directorate of General Administration, Council of Europe Strasbourg.
September 2012 – August 2013	Legal Officer, Human Rights Based Approach, Scottish Human Rights Commission, Edinburgh.
August 2011 – June 2012	Legal Officer, Department for the Execution of Judgements of the European Court of Human Rights, Council of Europe, Strasbourg.
May 2007 – July 2011	Lawyer, Special Advocates Support Office, Government Legal Department, London.
May 2008 – June 2011	Ad-hoc human rights consultant, Council of Europe (Armenia, Russia, Ukraine).
October 2004 – July 2005	Associate Minority Rights Officer/Assistant Legal Officer, UN Mission in Kosovo (sabbatical from Immigration Advisory Service).
September 2000 – April 2007	Immigration Counsellor / Tribunal Counsellor and Associate Solicitor, Immigration Advisory Service, London.
February 1999 – September 2000	Research and Campaigns Assistant, Amnesty International (International Secretariat), London.
September 1996 – August 1997	UN Watch Fellow, United Nations Watch, Geneva.
September 1994 – September 1996	Trainee Solicitor, Pattisons Solicitors, London.

EDUCATION

1992	LL.B (Hons) University of the West of England, Bristol
1994	Post-Grad Diploma in Legal Practice (Commendation), Birmingham City University
1998	LL.M Human Rights and Civil Liberties, University of Leicester

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS AND CONFERENCE PAPERS

- Submission to the UN Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons – report on older persons deprived of liberty (August 2022)

¹ More information can be provided about these roles on request.

- Canadian Lawyers for International Human Rights – Dignity behind bars: The Impact of Prison on Mental Health – Invited panelist (October 2021)
- McGill University, Montreal, Canada, Faculty of Law, *‘International Human Rights Law and the Treatment of Prisoners in Canada: A Practitioners’ Perspective* – Keynote speaker (October 2021)

HUMAN RIGHTS COACHING:

Human Rights Moot Court Judge Council of Europe/European Law Students Association – ongoing

Human Rights Careers Coach, *Human Rights Careers Corner* – 2012 to present

- International speaker and panelist on human rights careers – talks given at universities, legal institutions, and membership bodies;
- Human Rights career coach providing bespoke career support to human rights professionals through dedicated Power Hours (over 120 students supported to date);
- Podcast creator and presenter, *“The Passion Factor: Pursuing a Career in Human Rights”* in conjunction with Human Rights Pulse.

References will be provided upon request.

