

I cannot believe how quickly the months of my Fellowship at the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP) are flying by. The world of refugee law and policy is ever changing in response to international law and the policies of various resettlement countries, so IRAP is constantly recalibrating our work in response. Although I have been with IRAP for five months already, I cannot say that I am “used to” the job, because it changes every day.

The last time I wrote to you, I was working on the refugee cases of children from Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras affected by the sudden termination of the Central American Minors Humanitarian Parole Program. All of IRAP’s submissions for these clients have now been submitted to the U.S. for adjudication, and we are hoping for some positive outcomes in the coming months. My client work has since shifted to focus on a different refugee population: detainees on the island of Nauru. Nauru is a small island in Micronesia, and is home to a large refugee processing center where Australia has been sending would-be asylum seekers that it intercepts on boats in the Pacific. Refugees sent to Nauru live in terrible conditions; safe and sanitary housing options are scarce, and the medical treatment offered to refugees is sub-par. Until recently (when the U.S. agreed to consider these cases for resettlement in the U.S.), refugees on Nauru were detained indefinitely with no option for permanent resettlement. IRAP is assisting by drafting refugee cases for the most vulnerable among this population, and I have been tasked with writing two such appeals under the supervision of a staff attorney!

In addition to direct client work, I have been helping IRAP expand its organizational capacity in a number of ways. I am working on projects to help standardize the instructions IRAP provides to legal teams at our pro bono law firm and law school partners, onboard and train new interpreters in a variety of languages, and assist U.S.-affiliated Afghans and Iraqis to contact their military supervisors for employment verification. IRAP has been growing rapidly in the past two years, and I’m happy for the opportunity to contribute to that growth through projects that will outlive my time at IRAP.

One of the highlights of the past few months has been getting to know my coworkers as role models and mentors. I am in the process of applying to law school, and it has been incredibly valuable to learn from the experiences of a group of brilliant international human rights lawyers who went through the same process not too long ago. Their examples and advice will stay with me when I begin classes in the fall.

As always, I am incredibly grateful to JJCF for the funding that made this experience possible. It was a treat to read about the innovative and interesting work other grantees are doing around the world, and I am proud and thankful to be part of the JJCF community.

Best,

Freya Jamison