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PATTON BOGGS
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HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH 2024 FELLOWSHIP

We are pleased to tell you that the Foundation is again this year partnering with Human Rights Watch for a Fellowship. Our Deans' Circle law schools and the College d'Europe are invited to nominate a student for consideration. Due date for nominations is March 21, 2024. The Fellowship can be done either remotely or in Washington.

This exciting Fellowship offers a different experience from many because Human Rights Watch is an intrepid, on the ground organization. Its focus is more on “watching, documenting, and reporting” than on traditional lawyering. Its team are bold, self-starters.

Here is a HRW's description of the work the Fellow would be doing:

Blast injuries and traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) caused by singular or repeated exposure to blasts from explosive weapons can have short and long-term serious effects, including permanent disability and the loss of limbs, hearing, eyesight, or memory. The US military has made efforts in recent years to test and diagnose these injuries for soldiers who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. But very little attention has been paid to the civilians living in conflict-affected areas who have suffered similar injuries, especially when explosive weapons detonate in densely populated areas and near or in confined spaces.

This project will build on Human Rights Watch's long-term [research](#) and [advocacy](#) that contributed to the [adoption](#) in November 2022 of a global political [declaration](#) to curb the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas, which has now been endorsed by over 80 states. HRW would like to demonstrate how and why the long-term harms associated with TBIs in civilians should be taken into consideration when governments make decisions around the use of force (specifically targeting and proportionality assessments, as well as weapon selection) – and how these potential harms increase the likelihood of an attack being

unlawful according to the laws of war when explosive weapons are used in densely populated areas.

HRW would then encourage governments to adopt policies, programs, laws, and procedures to account for this harm in the application of force, screen for its effects, and provide long-term support for civilians impacted by TBIs caused by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas (which should extend both to civilians with these injuries in their country, regardless of the perpetrator, and civilians affected by attacks carried out overseas by the relevant government).

The Fellow would work with Human Rights Watch, first, on a literature review of the research that's already been published on the impact of TBIs in conflicts (on both soldiers and civilians). The Fellow would then use the medical research gathered to make a legal argument that the political declaration should be interpreted to cover TBI as one of the long-term/indirect effects on civilians of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. The first step would be to argue that TBI should be recognized as such an effect under the declaration's preamble, perhaps by comparing the Fellow's findings to other more widely recognized indirect effects. The next step, if there's time, would be to show how other commitments, e.g., data collection/victim assistance/maybe preventive measures, could be applied to TBI in civilians.

The Fellow would be supervised by and work primarily with Human Rights Watch's senior researcher in the Crisis and Conflict Division, [Richard Weir](#), with additional support from their Senior Arms Advisor, [Bonnie Docherty](#), and Crisis and Conflict Director, [Ida Sawyer](#).

Through this experience, the Fellow would get exposure to one of the leading international human rights organizations and learn how to work closely with and interpret international legal documents, apply a legal framework to the facts (in this case medical research), and make advocacy arguments for how an international instrument should be interpreted and implemented.

Ida Sawyer will be with us on March 6 to amplify and answer questions. Please note that this meeting will begin at 1 pm eastern time.

John and Rodney