



1. Can you tell about your professional background before you came in Nottingham?

I earned my bachelor's degree in law as the valedictorian (top graduate) of my class at Damascus University School of Law in 2005. I then did a couple years of training to obtain license to practice law in Syria. In 2012, I completed a master's degree in the international law from Damascus University. Since then I have been working in RSD Unit (Refugee Status Determination) at UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), Damascus, Syria.

2. What factors made you choose HRLC's Short Course?

I have been working as a senior protection officer in RSD Unit for more than eight years. In this position, I conduct interviews on daily basis with asylum seekers applying for refugee status from different nationalities and assess whether each applicant meets the refugee criteria based on 1951 Refugee Convention. I apply coherently principles of international human rights law, refugee law and international criminal law daily when assessing the cases. Such decisions are very critical and could be life changing for applicants. The HRLC's short course is directly related to my position at UNHCR and is designed to give in-depth understanding of Human Rights standards through attending LLM models, seminars, lectures, workshops, visits, and conferences.

3. What is your overall opinion of the course?

The course provided valuable insight and contextual knowledge of the practical operation of human rights law for those working in human rights, which is immediately applicable to my work in RSD. The course allows me to apply the rules of international human rights law (IHR), International criminal law (ICL) and International Criminal Evidence accurately. I am delighted to mention that this course has developed my experience and skills that are needed by large in the critical role I am undertaking as a RSD staff member at UNHCR.

4. What is the most valuable aspect of the course that you will be taking with you?

The HRLC's course provided me with an important opportunity to further develop my legal knowledge of several areas of international law which can then be applied in my work. During my participation in the course, I had an amazing opportunity to strengthen my experience in the International Criminal Law and International Refugee law as I conducted a professional research paper on the "Protection of Child Soldiers under International Law and the Application of the Refugee Status Criteria based on the 1951 Refugee Convention". The research was supervised and reviewed by Professor David Harris. The paper provided me with the necessary tools to take on responsibility for the adjudication of the most complex exclusion cases and determine the individual responsibility of the asylum seekers involved in serious violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) and the Geneva Conventions, and excluding them from international protection.



I share my knowledge and expertise with my fellow colleagues and assist in providing substantive legal guidance to new members of the team and in their on-going training and development. Therefore, my participation in this course will not only benefit myself but also my colleagues at UNHCR and ultimately the organization as a whole.

Usama Altisheh

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United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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