

## UVA LAW | International Human Rights UVA Law

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CAMILO SANCHEZ: Good morning, everyone. My name is Camilo Sánchez. I joined the faculty last year as a clinical professor in international human rights law. And I am the co-director of the human rights program. And I teach the clinic on human rights, and also the human rights study project. So the idea is to do a short introduction on what we do in terms of human rights here at the law school. And I'll hear your thoughts on new questions about that. So I'll do my best to try to answer your concerns and questions.

So I'm going to go 10 to 15 minutes first to give another view, and then we'll take the questions. All right? OK, so I'm thinking on how to present this. I thought it was a way to do it was to split this into two different moments. First, to explain the values and the philosophy that we have in the way that we teach human rights. And second, to explain how we do it, and the classes that we have, and the offers that we have here. So for the first part, to some of you would be, or some people would have actually told you, that it's kind of art. An art moment to start studying human rights law. Right?

So some people would say like, oh you want to-- oh so cute. You want to do human rights. That's so 80s. And it feels that way, we see the rise of illiberal democracies around the world, from India to Russia, from Turkey to Brazil, from Hungary to the Philippines. So something is happening in the world. Second, there are major changes in the global order. Long term shifts, for example, in geopolitics and the use of technology and connectivity in the world. That kind of updates the way in which human rights was practiced, and in the way that human rights was thought and taught. So for that is that many people today say that human rights are in crisis, and there is a crisis in human rights. So our take here, at UVA law school, at our human rights program, is that we don't kind of like the the idea of crisis.

We see it as a moment of transition. And with transitions, of course, you'll have moments of uncertainty but also of opportunity. And that's where we want to position ourselves. And to say this is a transition and what we want to do is to be part of that. To give our students an opportunity to be a part of this. And in anguish, I think it's a moment of transformation. So that's how we tackle these issues. And how we use the current political framework into what we do in the classroom and outside the classroom here. So the goal basically is how to prepare and train the human rights advocates that will lead this process. And that will be advocating for human rights after this transition process is over. That is what we are trying to do here.

So I often tell my students and my colleagues, I'm not interested at all in teaching or educating my younger self. In treating my students like I was at 20 years ago. And to teach them how successful or unsuccessful I was in practice. Using the tools that I had at my disposal 20 years

ago doing human rights. What I want to do is to lead my students to be the agents. To be the drivers for change in this new human rights field. That's what I want to do. So what I want to do is to open the doors for you to think about how the human rights field should look like in the future, if not today.

So it is not about the past, it is about the future. How we see and how human rights are going to fit in the new world that we are going to have. So that's basically what I try to do and what we at the human rights program are looking at all of these issues. So sometimes some practitioners, I have many friends are practitioners, and they tell me like, you know what it is most challenging about your job is that you are teaching people how to do a job that is not necessarily exist at this time. I'm sure you've heard many times that most of the jobs that you were going to do not exist at this time because the world is changing. And I tell them, no that is not my job. That is not how I see my challenge.

My challenge is to work with my students to help they create and invent the jobs that they would like to do in order to be effective human rights advocates and lawyers in the future. That is the idea and that's how we tackle this. And for that what we do here is we try to spend time identifying current trends and starting them. Second, what we do a lot is we try to use tools that predict or try to predict changes in trajectories. And third, we try to promote creative thinking and innovation. Those are three things that to me are very important. Not only in legal education in every branch of law, but for human rights law today it's critical. Not only how you well you can read treaties, are treaty law, and legal standards, and make arguments, of course that's important. But for me that's a given. Today is very much important to try to anticipate those changes. I'm from Colombia. I was educated in Colombia.

I live in Colombia for the better part of my life and after we did this peace agreement we had the referendum. And we consulted people, do you want this peace agreement or no? And most people said no. We were like, what? And I think that is definitely that cannot happen. You need to anticipate and to work around decisions. So that's what we are trying to do with our legal education here and I our take in human rights. So let me just put an example on the shift in communications. That many people are trying right now and I think is key in all of this discussion. Because as communicators I think older generations of human rights defenders, we kind of did not very successful. Not to say that we suck because right we advocate for the rights of everyone. It's for everyone's right, so everyone would be on our side, right?

And we usually are the minority in every discussion. Having you part of that? Have you been

part of that-- the only one, the stand-alone, the minorities. So we are not good at communicating. So for example, shifts that I think I've been important and we are trained with that. Talk more about solutions and not only problems. Highlight what we stand for and not necessarily what we're opposed to. Focus on creating opportunities and not only threats. If the government doesn't do these we are going to sue or we are going to do that. You know changing kind of the language. And finally emphasizing the support for heroes and no pity for victims. So that's what I'm talking about. How to confront all of these and how to change that. And to include that into your legal education.

And I've taken too long. But then the way how we do this, we have a broad offer different classroom activities and extracurricular activities outside. That mainly thematically we are divided into two groups. One is on international human rights law and then domestic constitutional law. In the international side you'll have hands on education. We have a clinic, the clinic that I am now directing. I would say that we have three ways to teach international human rights law. One is a theoretical legal education in which you will have international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and other classes. And second, we have the clinic, which we take and we partner with organizations across the globe. And we work on real cases and real projects. And third, in a classroom how to conduct research on human rights.

And specifically on human rights issues and how to do it ethically and effectively. And for that we call that the human rights study project. I invite you to search our website and look at the video. We have recently made a video on our last trip to Nepal. And it was very cool because we went to the Himalayas, to every base camp. And that was part of what we consider a learning experience. In a way that we did not only have like regular meetings with human rights defenders, and government, and other actors. But also we had time to reflect and to think in a different environment. That I think it's key to this idea of innovative, creative thinking. So that's part of what we do and we also have within the Human Rights Program. We have a year long Speakers Series event in which we invite practitioners and scholars from different realms.

So more from an academic take. Some others more from the practitioners take-- to come here and to share their experience. And we do that throughout the year. We also are working really hard on spotting opportunities for recent graduates or for students to spend time abroad. Both abroad and here in the US working with human rights issues. And as we see it, our role is not to-- it is not that --we want to be ambitious. That's what I think that we need to take these as

an opportunity for transitioning. But it's not that we are creating the Avengers of-- human rights of Avengers. I'm not the Stan Lee of human rights, far from that. But how do connect people and how to create leaders that can create opportunities. And contribute to change from different perspectives, different realms, from different positions.

So it is not that we are trying to educate the role model, NGO person, that is going to work for a non-profit. And that's the only way to do human rights work. You can do and we take it like that. You can promote human rights from private practice, from government, internationally, domestically. It is how you understand your opportunities and how you connect all of those opportunities. And mobilize your resources to do that. That is the idea how to do it cleverly. That's what we are very invested and interested in. So that's me. Now questions.

**AUDIENCE:** Do you see people come out with an interest in international human rights going straight into those jobs in that field? Or do you tend to get experience in entry-level private practice jobs and then transition later?

**CAMILO SANCHEZ:** Both ways. There are some people for example that are truly interested in human rights activism primarily. And they try to go-- use their first summer to go to usually an international organization. For example, the ICC, International Criminal Court, or the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in Washington DC, something like that. And usually for their second summer they go to a big human rights NGO here or abroad. You know I just try to have two different experiences. And some others try government. So we have very successful examples of people that say like, hm yeah but what I think is that I need more skills, and tools, litigating cases. So maybe if I go to the Department of Justice, or something like that, I'll get that.

Or some people that see that the future here is the connection between human rights, and corruption, and anti-corruption laws. So I'm going to take private practice into that field in order to have an added value when I am in practice and when I want to be part of this discussion. So we have different takes, and I think many students successfully have done it through all sorts of ways. And I think that's key. OK, no questions.

**AUDIENCE:** You said you went to Nepal during the clinic. What kind of trips do you take during your clinics and what do you do when you in those other countries?

**CAMILO SANCHEZ:** OK, right. So Nepal was part of what we call the human rights study project. That is a year long course in which first during the fall semester we start to learn about how to conduct

human rights research. And we do background research on the country that we pick. So for example, in this case we started to study Nepal. But also we started to work with, what does it mean to do no harm when you are doing are conducting human rights studies? What are the precautions that we would have? What are important factors that we need to take into account once we are there? How are we going to behave? And what it would be considered ethically human rights work?

So we did that during the fall then in January term we went to Nepal, we went to Kathmandu first. And we met with different stakeholders, government, civil society organization, independent journalists, international community working there. And then we went to Pokhara, which is the I'd say the second largest city in Nepal. And we met with others staff of people academia and others. And after that we did a trek in the Khumbu region. And for that we had other partners, and [INAUDIBLE] that joined the trip, and there were experts on different issues. So they helped us to understand what we just witnessed. And we had really good conversations about how to relate that to a broader idea of practice. And also human rights, and problems, and the differences, and different takes and that. So that's what we did. With the clinic, what we do is that we partner with an NGO, or an international organization, in order to conduct a project throughout the year.

So for example, this year we try to have some projects that bridge the gap existing gaps between practice. Because what you find these days a lot is that people don't talk to each other. So one example is those who work on international investment treaty law and those who work on human rights. They affect each other but they don't talk. So one of our projects was to try to make the connection. And to call on those who work on international treaty law to say like, look human rights are important. Because if you don't take into consideration this then when you're implementing your project-- chances are that you're going to have a community that will want to work with you, or rejecting your project, or something like that. You have to take that into consideration. And on the other hand to tell human rights people, look this exist and this is also a body of law.

And if you just go recommending states. For example, the Inter-American Commission. If you go recommending to states, oh don't do that. States are going to say like, what I need to get money somehow, right, to pay the bills. So to bridge that. So that's part of what we did with the clinic this year. We did that also with fiscal policies on human rights. And we also had a project on migrants. We partnered with the UN committee on migrant workers because they are

working on that document. Setting the standards for the tensions and deprivation of liberty of migrants. Something that is very close to what is happening here in the US. So for example, we're working on that. So that's kind of how we try to integrate all of this vision into what we do during the year.

The clinic is also a year long commitment. OK, what to do?

**AUDIENCE:**

I just had a in relation to-- people of an interest in particularly focusing on civilians in armed conflicts and refugees as well. I guess through the combination of clinics. And can you just describe the opportunities and pathways that students tend to go from UVA if they have that sort of an interest?

**CAMILO**

**SANCHEZ:**

Yes. Actually, next week, I don't know if you've seen the flyers. Next week we're having an alumna that's coming here. She's been working for the residuals tribunals for what happened during the in the [INAUDIBLE]. 20 or 30 years ago now. You know I kept thinking that when I say 20 years ago-- is the 70s. But yes, so we have different people that have used that knowledge and the training that they've got in here working in different parts of the world. And with different issues regarding international humanitarian law. For example, operations law, well how they call it here in the [INAUDIBLE] school. And doing either justice, humanitarian intervention, different takes and that, and also the refugees. Actually the clinic is now working with a different project.

It's working with Venezuelan migrants in Latin American countries. Because as Latin America was always ascending country, ascending region, to Spain to the US. We were not prepared at all to receive migrants. So now what we've found is that all of the systems for refugees are completely useless. They make no determination when they do it, it is not according to law, they don't even know the applicable law. Funny fact is that back in the 90s, the Latin American countries signed it Cartagena declaration, which expanded the notion of refugee. Which is a really good thing because international notion is only for those who have been prosecuted for political reasons. And they say no, if there are systematic violations of human rights or civil unrest we're going to actually cover those with international protections. And now they don't know that they signed that.

We're very near at the time they did it and now we have got like, look, the Cartagena agreement exists. So we're working on that refugee at the Inter-American system. And I think that's something that is kind of new. Before what happened in Venezuela, that was completely

nonexistent and now we're seeing how important that is even here.

**AUDIENCE:** So you talked about-- thinking about this is a transition period, and innovating, and anticipating, on where we're going outside of the traditional legal study of international human rights. So I know at UVA we have opportunity to pursue dual degrees and to take courses outside of the law school. Can you speak to any of those opportunities that you think are particularly useful for folks interested in international human rights?

**CAMILO SANCHEZ:** One that I think is very useful is a dual degree with Batten School, the MPP program. I think that's really important now because as these are very structural problems unless you think of policy options. For this is not going to be like a very effective solution. So even in cases that we consider as isolated violations you need to think systematically. So for me public policy is just so important right now. I think everything that deals with data and how to analyze data is really key these days. It's not that we need to become math geeks and all that stuff to do our work. But unless we understand that and are part of the conversation, we not going to be as effective as we want to and as we need to be. So that too would be very important. So time is up. So if you're want more, come join us. Thank you.