

HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER | INDEPENDENT HUMAN RIGHTS CONSULTANT | CAREER COACH | VISITING PROFESSOR OF HUMAN RIGHTS | NON-PRACTISING SOLICITOR

Internationally experienced award-winning 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 28 years of professional experience in International Organizations including the UN and the Council of Europe, the British government (Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office), civil society (Penal Reform International, Amnesty International), National Human Rights Institutions (Scottish Human Rights Commission) and academia (McGill University, Surrey University). I bring extensive experience in writing and managing the production of influential policy reports. I have a comprehensive, expert level legal and practical knowledge of international human rights standards and norms on criminal justice and detention and a strong understanding of penal related issues obtained through practical visits to different closed institutions in various countries (Canada, Georgia, Japan, the United Kingdom, Spain). I am a member of the pool of experts for the Council of Europe monitoring body, the Committee for the Prevention of Torture. 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. In July 2024, I was recognized for my human rights work and awarded *Freelancer of the Year* (Work Avenue). I care deeply about the rights of people in prison; you will find me advocating for a rights respecting environment in all places of detention.

Expertise	Competencies
• International Human Rights law • Criminal justice reform and human rights • Prisoners' rights, prison reform, dignity behind bars • Detention monitoring • Access to justice (vulnerable groups; women in conflict with the law) • Combating torture	Legal and policy research, analysis and advisory Workshop facilitation and training (development and design; e-learning) Speechwriting and strategic communications (reports, toolkits) Human rights advocacy and public diplomacy (UN, Council of Europe) Monitoring and evaluation (bolt on subject matter expert), reporting Capacity building, strategic and technical assistance Professional coaching and mentoring Lecturing

COUNTRIES OF EXPERTISE:

Asia: Thailand | Japan | Bangladesh

Europe and Caucuses: Ukraine | Russia | Armenia | Georgia | Albania | Kosovo | France | Spain

Sub-Saharan Africa: Ethiopia

Americas: Canada

Remote work: Myanmar (Burma)

LANGUAGES: English (fluent) | French (working knowledge)

ACADEMICS: LLB (Law, University of the West of England, Bristol) | LLM (Human Rights and Civil Liberties (Leicester University)

Employment			
Independent Human Rights Consultant (See selected projects and assignments below)			September 2019 – date
Human rights career coach			September 2019 - date
Penal Reform International Policy and Programme Manager, London			October 2018 – August 2019
Centre for Human Rights & Legal Pluralism, McGill University O’Brien Fellow in Residence, Montreal, Canada			February 2018 – June 2018
School of Law, University of Surrey, England Module convenor and associate tutor (International Human Rights law), Guildford, England			October 2017 – February 2018
Prisoners Abroad/Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office Human Rights Advisor, Prisoner Policy team, Consular Directorate, London, England			September 2014 – September 2017

EARLY CAREER HISTORY:

Legal Advisor, Directorate General of Administration, **Council of Europe (2013-2014)** | Legal Officer (Human Rights Based Approach), **Scottish Human Rights Commission (2012-2013)** | Legal Officer, Department for the Execution of Judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, **Council of Europe (2011-2012)** | Lawyer, Special Advocates Support Office, **UK Government Legal Department (2007 – 2011)** | Legal Officer (Prizren)/Associate Minority Rights Officer (Pristina), **UN Mission in Kosovo (2004 – 2005, sabbatical)** | Immigration Counsellor / Tribunal Counsellor / Associate Solicitor, **Immigration Advisory Service (2000 – 2007)** | Research & Campaigns Assistant, **Amnesty International (1999-2000)** | UN Watch Fellow, **United Nations Watch (1996-1997)** | Trainee solicitor, **Pattisons solicitors (1994-1996)**.

Further information about early career roles can be provided upon request.

Dates	Selected projects & assignments
November 2024 Tirana, Albania	International consultant and trainer Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Presence in Albania Formally co-trained 30 prison staff on international human rights standards including the UN Standard Minimum Rules on the Treatment of Prisoners ('the UN Mandela Rules') and empowered them to create a rights-respecting environment in prisons across Albania. Training also covered the protection of LGBTIQ + people in the areas of health, safety and security, material conditions of detention, disciplinary measures and use of force and restraints.
June 2024 – September 2024 Home-based	International consultant & bolt-on subject matter expert Mid-term Review, Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies, Mahidol University, Thailand Evaluated a human rights education programme (in conjunction with monitoring and evaluation team) at a higher education institute in Myanmar. - Conducted 9 semi-structured online interviews with stakeholders involved in the management and delivery of the human rights education programme including academics, donors, students, civil society organisations to gather insights, lessons learned and promising practice; - Reviewed and evaluated all programme documentation related to the delivery of the human rights education programme; - Analysed the responses of the interviews and programme documentation and compiled learnings; - Co-wrote a concise evaluation report with key recommendations for the future delivery of the human rights programme.
May 2024 – August 2024 Home-based	Rights based justice consultant Netherlands Helsinki Committee Conducted a comprehensive mapping of the current cooperation context and needs assessment in Armenia and Moldova to identify key challenges, opportunities, and priorities in probation, prison, and restorative justice systems in support of a Dutch government funding bid.
March 2024 - September 2024; August 2025 - present Home-based	International consultant and human rights career coach Clooney Foundation for Justice – Waging Justice for Women Fellowship The <i>CFJ – Waging Justice for Women Fellowship</i> offer one-year, fully funded fellowships to a class of ten early-career women lawyers in sub-Saharan Africa. The aim of CFJ's Waging Justice for Women Fellowship Program is to equip African gender justice champions with the tools they need to challenge inequality through the courts. - Facilitated a 3-hour group online career coaching workshop, <i>Get ready for Job Success</i>, for the 2024 cohort of Waging Justice for Women Fellows on CVs/cover letters, personal branding for human professionals and interview preparation; - Delivered one-to-one career coaching sessions to help empower and equip CJF Fellows with the skills and confidence to build a sustainable career in human rights.

October 2024 – December 2024 Home-based	International Consultant Ensemble contre la peine de mort (Together against the Death Penalty) Co-wrote and developed a practice-based publication for National Human Rights Institutions and National Preventive Mechanisms, Monitoring conditions of detention of prisoners sentenced to death : A practical guide for NHRIs and NPMs (published in French and English, January 2025). The guide assists National Preventive Mechanisms and National Human Rights Institutions in their work to assess detention conditions of prisoners sentenced to death. The handbook provides tools, practical guidance and advice for assessing the specific conditions of prisoners sentenced to death, in accordance with international and regional standards.
November 2023 Barcelona, Spain	Trainer European Judicial Training Network Successfully delivered in person training to 38 European prosecutors and judges as part of a 2-day training on, <i>Human and Fundamental Rights in the 21st Century: Dialogue between the national and European Courts</i> . Presentation delivered on <i>Judicial dialogue and people in vulnerable situations in conflict with the law</i> .
August 2022 – December 2022 Home -based	International consultant Penal Reform International & the Council of Europe Contributed to drafting a practice-based publication, Guidance Document on the European Prison Rules (published, 2023). The guide offers practical guidance to legislators, policymakers, prison authorities, monitoring bodies, probation services, social welfare and healthcare services, NGOs and other relevant stakeholders, to help and encourage them to take action to respond appropriately to the needs of prisoners in Europe.
August 2022 – November 2022 Home-based /Dublin	International consultant Irish Penal Reform Trust Co-author, Maternal Imprisonment in Ireland : A Scoping Study (published 2023). This in-depth publication provides data-driven and evidence based research into maternal imprisonment in Ireland to inform the work of IPRT in advocating for alternatives to prison, particularly where the care concerns a child’s primary care.
February 2023 Home-based	International consultant UN Special Rapporteur on Torture (UNSRT) Supported the UNSRT with ad hoc speechwriting and drafting press materials in advance of the launch of Good practices in national criminalization, investigation, prosecution and sentencing for offences of torture (report published, February 2023). Report was presented to the UN Human Rights Council and disseminated widely across civil society.

January 2022 – June 2022 Home-based / Dhaka, Bangladesh	International consultant UN Office on Drugs and Crime (Regional Office for South Asia) Successfully delivered training on the theoretical and practical aspects of the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners to 70 prison healthcare staff in Bangladesh. • Designed and developed training curricula, facilitated and delivered training including through the use of interactive learning tools (e-learning videos); • Delivered in-person training to 70-80 prison healthcare staff including nurses, doctors and other clinicians (May 2022); • Empowered Bangladeshi prison healthcare staff to implement a human rights based approach in their day-to-day work and built community knowledge of international human rights standards on prisoner's rights and the right to health in detention. • Delivered training on the rights of LGBTIQ+ people deprived of liberty (access to clinicians, medication, safety and security).
June 2021- January 2022 Home-based/ Strasbourg, France	International consultant Council of Europe & Penal Reform International Conducted in-depth research and market analysis on the COVID-19 response in prisons in the Council of Europe region. • Conducted online stakeholder interviews with 30 criminal justice professionals in Armenia and Portugal to draw out promising practices and lessons learned; • Co-authored a report on the impact of COVID-19 on prison reform priorities including detailed recommendations to government authorities and other key stakeholders ; • Presented findings to the Council of Europe secretariat and member states at a multilateral meeting on the COVID-19 pandemic in prisons and its impact on prison reform priorities (November 2022).
June 2021 Home-based	International consultant Penal Reform International Contributed to drafting a practice-based publication, 'Older persons in detention: A framework for preventive monitoring' (2021). This tool aims to support detention monitors in assessing conditions for older persons in prisons in line with international human rights standards to ensure that the rights of older persons in detention are protected.
2020 – 2023 Home-based	International consultant International Partnership for Human Rights Authored/co-authored 4 human rights reports documenting human rights violations in Russia, Ukraine, Central Asia and the Caucasus. Reports include, <i>Human Rights Impact of the COVID 19 response in Russia</i> (August 2020); <i>Media Freedom in Crimea</i> (July 2021); <i>Welcome to Minsk: violations of the rights of creative professionals, activists and artists during the post-election crackdown in Belarus</i> (March 2021); <i>Belarus on Hold: Crackdown on post-election protests</i> (September 2020). See IPHR website here .

September 2019 – to date Home-based	Human Rights Career coach Panellist and keynote speaker As a human rights career coach, I have: • Successfully supported, coached and mentored 280 human rights professionals (and counting) through tailored Power Hours on CVs/cover letters, interview preparation and personal branding for human rights careers. I have helped my clients to secure roles with International Organizations, human rights NGOs and other human rights bodies and institutions. • Delivered group human rights career coaching to the American Society of International Law, Mentoring group and the Clooney Foundation for Justice, Waging Justice for Women Fellows; • Presented impactful and engaging human rights career talks to industry bodies, academic institutions including the European Law Students Association, Cambridge University, Geneva Academy of International and Humanitarian Law, McGill University (Montreal, Canada) to name but a few; • Received glowing testimonials for my work, <i>‘Working with Vicki was an absolute breath of fresh air. She has the perfect and unique combination of warmth and analytical thought’</i> (Megan Capp)
October 2018 – August 2019 Home-based	Policy and Programme manager Penal Reform International Key responsibilities: • Identified and lead advocacy and policy at the international level (UN, Council of Europe) on the rights of persons deprived of their liberty; • Researched and wrote on penal reform issues and prepared briefings, training materials and strategic communications; • Developed and maintained relationships and networks with national and international partners and decision-makers; • Supported and provided technical assistance to PRI staff, partner organizations, national authorities and international stakeholders on criminal justice, penal reform and international human rights law; • Undertook high-level representation and public diplomacy at international and regional criminal justice conferences, expert meetings and events including, Rights for women in prison and the UN Bangkok Rules: A global symposium (School of Social Service Administration, University of Chicago), May 2019; the Council of Europe, Council for Penological Co-operation (PC-CP). Key achievements: • Delivered an intervention on women in the criminal justice system to the UN Commission on Crime Prevention & Criminal Justice (UNODC) (May 2022); • Planned, oversaw and co-authored PRI flagship report, Global Prison Trends Report (2019) • Oversaw the publication of a toolkit, Mental Health in Prison: a short guide for prison staff (2018) and led consultations with an Expert group to review and contribute to content.

February 2018 – June 2018 Montreal, Canada	O'Brien Fellow-in-Residence, Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism McGill University 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 project included expansive interviews with key stakeholders (including lawyers, Parliamentarians, civil society organisations) and the drafting of a practice-based publication, ' <i>The implementation of the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners in Canada: A Practitioner's Perspective</i> ' (Journal of Human Rights Practice, February 2021).
October 2017 – February 2018 Guildford, England	Associate tutor and module convenor, International Human Rights law Department of Law, Surrey University Key responsibilities: • Curriculum development – designed and developed the module syllabus and academic content for IHRL module; • Teaching and lecturing – delivered course content through lectures (70 students), tutorials (8-12 students) and other learning activities (Moot Court); • Assessment – set, marked and assessed students' work in line with university benchmarks and criteria.
September 2014 – September 2017 London, England	Human Rights Advisor, Prisoner Policy Team Consular Directorate, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office / Prisoners Abroad Key responsibilities: • 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; • Delivered 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. Key achievements: • Undertook human rights monitoring missions to Ethiopia (April 2015) and Japan (October 2016) to visit British detainees, lobby host governments and to ensure treatment in line with international human rights standards. Successfully lobbied for provision of healthcare and English lessons on behalf of a vulnerable British national in prison in Japan. • Delivered training to FCDO (including to consular staff at FCDO posts in Madrid and Japan) and Prisoners Abroad staff on fair trial rights and the prevention of ill-treatment and torture in detention. • Successfully and sensitively advised FCDO staff in Japan to ensure human rights compliant treatment of a transgender prisoner.

May 2008 – June 2011 Armenia, Ukraine, Russia	International human rights expert Council of Europe - Designed and implemented capacity building activities, including workshops, training and conferences for justice sector and law enforcement bodies in beneficiary states on the protection of the rights of detainees and effective investigation of complaints of ill treatment; - Trained members of the Armenian judiciary (including Supreme Court judges), Russian and Ukrainian lawyers and civil society organizations on European Human Rights law, protection of the rights of detainees and effective investigation of complaints of ill treatment.
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PUBLICATIONS & CONFERENCE PAPERS PORTFOLIO:

I have written widely for academic journals, blogs and other industry related publications. My full publication portfolio can be found here:

<https://www.clippings.me/vickiprais>

Selected publications include:

- Joint submission on Brazil to UN Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights in support of report to Human Rights Council on the situation of human rights of women and girls in criminal justice detention (Vicki Prais & Flavia Pinto, published April 2025)
- ‘Older persons in detention in England and Wales’* 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; in capacity as Visiting Professor of Human Rights, Birmingham City University)
- 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)

MEMBERSHIP AND PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS

[Atlas Women](#), **Founder, Atlas Consultants’ Collective** I am the founder of the Atlas Consultants’ Collective, a global community of international human rights consultants. I created this community, under the umbrella of Atlas Women (a network of 10,000 women in International Law), to provide a space for independent human rights consultants to meet, share and find solidarity and support. We meet online monthly and have been operational since February 2020.

[Helga Pederson Moot Court competition](#), **European Law Students Association** | Academic Board Member

[Midlands4cities](#) **Doctoral Training Partnership** | Member, Partner Advisory Group

[Human Rights Lawyers Association \(UK\)](#) | Member, Executive Committee