LL.M. Program in International Human Rights Law
The Center for Civil and Human Rights at the University of Notre Dame

CCHR was founded at Notre Dame Law School in 1973 by Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., as an outgrowth of his pioneering work on the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. It was the first such center dedicated to the study of human rights at an American law school.

The Center’s mission is twofold: first, to educate human rights lawyers from across the globe, providing them with the knowledge and skills to promote and defend human rights where they are threatened. Second, to engage in research that broadens our understanding of human rights violations and effective ways to respond to those threats.

The LL.M. in International Human Rights Law

CCHR supports a master’s degree in international human rights law, specifically designed for human rights lawyers. Applicants to our LL.M. program are inspired by their compassion for victims of human rights violations, but wish to sharpen their technical skills and deepen their theoretical grounding. Students graduate from Notre Dame with both the knowledge and the network they need to succeed as effective human rights defenders. Many students receive full scholarships.
A curriculum designed for the needs of human rights defenders

Our program is carefully crafted to meet the intellectual and practical needs of lawyers practicing human rights law in their home countries and in regional or international institutions.

Required courses:
- International Law
- International Human Rights Research and Writing
- Foundations of International Human Rights Law
- Accountability for Gross Human Rights Violations
- Regional Human Rights Protection
- Human Rights Practice

In addition to the required coursework, students design their own concentration of study from a wide range of courses both within the Law School and in other University departments, such as the Kellogg Institute for International Studies, the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, and Mendoza College of Business.

Elective courses include:
- Civil Rights Law
- International Environmental Law
- Catholic Social Thought
- Ethnic Conflict and Peace Processes
- International Labor Law
- Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- Politics of Reconciliation
- Women’s Human Rights
- Law of International Trade
- Gender Issues and International Law Seminar
- International Criminal Law
- Intellectual Property and International Justice
- International Law and the Use of Force
- Transnational Corporations and Human Rights
- Human Trafficking
- NGO Management
- Intensive Trial Advocacy
- LL.M. Thesis
Changing the world one human rights lawyer at a time

CCHR graduates join a collaborative alumni network of over 300 human rights lawyers from more than 85 countries around the world. Many serve at senior levels in international tribunals, intergovernmental bodies, government, academia, and preeminent non-governmental organizations, promoting respect for human rights.

Our alumni at work around the globe

CCHR graduates have held key positions at important human rights bodies including:

- Inter-American Court of Human Rights
- Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
- European Court of Human Rights
- African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights
- CEJIL
- Constitutional Court of South Africa
- Amnesty International
- ICRC
- African Union
- International Criminal Court
- Brazilian National Truth Commission
- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Human Rights Watch

“The Center for Civil and Human Rights was essential to my formation as a human rights lawyer. It opened my eyes to an international perspective and instilled in me the spirit of the “Fighting Irish”: sincerity, humility, a hunger for continual learning, and an eagerness to improve society. To put it simply, I was one kind of lawyer before Notre Dame and a different kind of lawyer after Notre Dame.”

Pablo Saavedra, a Chilean lawyer, received his LL.M. in international human rights law at CCHR in 1996. He is now the Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, one of the world’s leading human rights bodies.
For nearly 30 years, Notre Dame has trained some of the world’s most dedicated human rights defenders.

We welcome your application to join this dynamic network of lawyers promoting human rights and advancing human dignity around the world.

Dillorom Abdulloeva
14 LL.M.
Uzbekistan

“I decided to go to the best school in international human rights law to get myself equipped with the best tools. My classmates' experiences and their unique backgrounds related to their respective countries enriched my understanding of international human rights law and the application of foundational rights. I will think deeply beyond positive law by questioning the foundations of human rights while appreciating the values of human rights.”

Lwando Xaso
13 LL.M.
South Africa

“The Notre Dame LL.M. from Notre Dame carries a lot of weight around the world. The program, with its wide variety of courses and excellent professors who also have practical experience in human rights, provides a solid foundation for a career in human rights. Notre Dame has educated many prominent South African human rights lawyers that I admire and I wanted to follow the same path. I love being a part of this institution that has a message of service at its core.”

Erick Antonio Acuña Pereda
12 LL.M.
Peru

“The Notre Dame program is unique because it uses different approaches to study human rights law, encouraging the students to approach issues both theoretically and practically. The student body is diverse and multicultural, and classroom discussions challenge everyone to analyze questions from another's perspective. Notre Dame's strong ties to both the Inter-American Commission and Court of Human Rights also provide students with one-of-a-kind fellowship opportunities.”

Sean O'Brien
Director of Academic Programs

humanrights.nd.edu
Applying to the LL.M. Program

Applicants to the LL.M. Program in International Human Rights Law must possess a law degree. All applicants will be considered for scholarships in support of their tuition and living expenses.

A complete application will include:

- University of Notre Dame Graduate School Application (online)
- CCHR Supplemental Application (online)
- Resume or Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- Statement of Intent
- 3 letters of recommendation
- Transcripts with proof of J.D. or LL.B. or equivalent degree (and English translations if necessary)
- TOEFL or IELTS (for non-native speakers of English only)
- Application fee (online by credit card or check by mail)

Complete application materials are due by January 15. Acceptances and scholarship awards are normally sent out by April 15.

For more information, visit humanrights.nd.edu and click "Apply."

Postgraduate opportunities

CCHR’s commitment to its graduates extends beyond graduation. Upon completion of the LL.M. degree, students may apply for additional funding from the Center to seek an internship with an appropriate human rights institution or non-governmental organization.

Among the many organizations providing internship opportunities to our graduates, CCHR partners with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in Washington, D.C., to sponsor an eight-month fellowship for a graduating LL.M. student each year. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights in San Jose, Costa Rica, also offers a year-long clerkship at the Court for a recent LL.M. graduate.

Our internship assistance – in addition to our faculty expertise, intimate class size, and research initiatives – contributes to Notre Dame’s international reputation.
The Center for Civil & Human Rights
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On the front cover: Renowned Guatemalan human rights lawyer Mario Domingo (LL.M. ’08) at the Catholic church in Santiago Sacatepéquez, Guatemala.


Courtesy of the University of Notre Dame Archives