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ARNELL, P.

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Real-World Human Rights Impact

[Posted on RGView](#) by Stacey Lynch on 17 September 2021



Figure 1. Dr. Paul Arnell

Dr Paul Arnell, of The Law School, writes about the real and important role human rights play in the practice of law in Scotland. He speaks of an interesting and life-changing example of a former RGU Law student.

Tuition in human rights is compulsory on the Law School's two undergraduate courses, the Bachelor of Law and the Bachelor of Arts Law and Management. This is because the Law Society of Scotland requires it as part of its accreditation. I would suggest it is also included because of its inherent importance and interest. As a core module around 100 students per year are taught about the system of human rights applying in Scotland.

As module leader I am not uncommonly approached by students with a keen interest in the subject seeking my advice on what they can do to translate that enthusiasm into action – paid or otherwise. Regrettably, most jobs in the law do not include a human rights element. Conveyancing, corporate and contract, litigation and even criminal and family law only rarely raise questions of human rights. As such I direct interested students to scour the websites of NGOs such as Amnesty International, Justice and Liberty and to approach individuals in organisations including the Scottish Human Rights Commission and Scottish and UK Governments for possible opportunities.

This is not to say human rights do not have a real and important role to play in the practice of law in Scotland. An interesting and life-changing example of which came to my attention recently and I was delighted to discover that at its heart was one of our former students. After leaving RGU Joseph Rasmussen has gone on to practice law in a firm of solicitors in Glasgow specialising in immigration law. Joseph, who graduated with his LLB several years ago, now works with Maguire Solicitors.

The heart-warming story highlighting the relevance of human rights concerned the reunification of a Syrian family separated whilst fleeing the conflict in their country. Their home had been destroyed in an airstrike. The father and two children had come to Glasgow, but the mother and a third child had ended up in Germany. Joseph worked at bringing the mother and youngest child to Scotland, and was successful. There is a clip on YouTube of the two eldest children excitedly running across the platform at Central Station with flowers to greet their mother for the first time in a year. Joseph represented the mother in her reunion application.

In corresponding with Joseph about the story he said it was clear during his degree that human rights work was where he envisaged his future. Applying international law and human rights to the benefit of individuals in Scotland, he said, was inspiring. In the case that made the news, though, re-uniting the family was only the first step. Joseph now faced getting the family granted asylum so they could be sure of their continued right to live in Scotland.

Whilst Joseph is inspired by applying human rights and refugee law for the benefit of his clients I am inspired by him and his work. That our Human Rights module, the Law School and University played a role in this success story is both gratifying and humbling. It is pleasing indeed to be reminded that our work can, and does, lead to socially positive real-world impact. We should all be proud of that fact.