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End of summer internship at Human Rights First

Thanks to the 2015 Rosenberg internship award, I was able to work for an organization that uncovers and targets human rights violations. Human Rights First, a nonprofit organization, protects human rights around the world by exposing violations and pressuring governments to change their policies and practices.

I was an intern at HRF's Research and Analysis Department, focusing on Antisemitism and Extremism. I worked under the supervision of Tad Stahnke, Vice President for Research and Analysis, analyzing antisemitism and extremism, especially in Greece. My summer internship was, in many ways, a continuation of my college education. My Senior Project examined Greek identity and the impact of rising immigration on that identity, and why, in this environment, the far right has been strengthened. I focused in particular on the history and ascendancy of the Greek far-right party Golden Dawn. My internship allowed me to analyze Golden Dawn's impact on Greek society today.

A trial of Golden Dawn supporters and Golden Dawn Members of Parliament began in April 2015. My job was to translate into English the press coverage of the trial as well as Greek governmental documents. The trial of Golden Dawn is particularly important because it will show whether or not Golden Dawn is a criminal organization. This legal process began by stripping the Golden Dawn MP's of their immunity from prosecution. It was alleged that they, and other party members, were legally responsible for a series of violent attacks

against civilians. The trial will hear evidence alleging that Golden Dawn supporters followed orders to conduct criminal acts. If the trial determines that the Golden Dawn party is indeed a criminal organization, then it should be legally treated as such. On the other hand, if it cannot be proven that Golden Dawn was a criminal organization, its members should not be prosecuted for their extreme far right ideology due to their right of free speech. The Greek constitution protects the right of speech by allowing different ideological parties to participate in the election process, but if Golden Dawn is found to be a criminal organization then the party will be banned. That does not mean that it would prevent other parties from being created with similar ideologies, but it would definitely provide a message that the country condemns political parties that have links to criminal activities. Human Rights urged the Greek and American governments to do what was necessary to ensure a fair trial.

I also collected and compiled documents about Golden Dawn's alleged involvement in antisemitic violence, and examples of Golden Dawn's antisemitic rhetoric. Additionally, I organized a collection of Internet-based materials about Golden Dawn, including experts talking about Golden Dawn, and interviews of Golden Dawn supporters. These files were both in English and Greek. HRW now has a vast amount of material, in both languages, that allows the organization to have a better understanding of the rise of the far right in Greece.

I also documented other Greek organizations involved in antisemitic violence in recent years. Even though this material has not been published yet, it was of great interest to the organization because, according to a 2014 PEW study, Jews are viewed more unfavorably

in Greece than anywhere else in Europe¹. Additionally, I researched and wrote about antisemitic violence in Sweden, Denmark and Norway. I also researched anti-Muslim events in some European countries. I learned not only about anti-Muslim attitudes, but also how different governments have adopted diverse models to try and reduce the threat of future violence towards their Muslim communities.

I also published two articles on the Human Rights First website. Through this experience I learned how blogs are posted and the process by which a blog draft goes through an organization to make sure it represents an organization's style and beliefs. First I drafted a blog post, then I shared it with the organization's writing team. They, in turn, showed it to my superiors who reviewed it, and made changes. After it went back to the writing team for one final review, the blog was shared internally, and finally published.²

My summer at Human Rights First was an eye-opener. It helped me develop and enrich my understanding of a subject about which I am passionate. I am very grateful for having received the Rosenberg award and also for the opportunity to learn more about the non-governmental-organization world in general, and particularly, its important role in research and analysis.

¹ <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/05/12/chapter-4-views-of-roma-muslims-jews/>

² <http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/blog/european-governments-should-protect-vulnerable-minorities> and <http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/blog/golden-dawn-and-greek-debt-crisis>