

Name: Irsa Khan

Personal Statement for Young Diplomats Forum 2019-London

As a lawyer in Pakistan, I wish to take a leading role in addressing key areas of human rights laws which are blatantly violated in my country. These primarily include the rights guaranteed to women and children, which exist in theory but are rarely applied in practice. Women, especially those in smaller towns, villages and rural areas, are not made aware about the legal rights and remedies that they enjoy with respect to the laws governing marriage, divorce or inheritance. I wish to launch an NGO in the future that works alongside such women in Pakistan and provides them with accessible pro bono legal services which they would otherwise be deprived, due to lack of resources. I wish for this NGO to work closely with private and state-run shelters for women, who can house these women in the foreseeable event that their families disapprove of the interference of legal institutions in areas of life which Pakistani society deems as untouchable because they are 'private, domestic affairs' e.g., domestic abuse perpetrated by the husband. Additionally, I wish for this NGO to take a leading role in working with children who are victims of bonded labour, a rampant practice in South Asia. I hope for the NGO to work closely with public schools and to formulate schemes which allow former child labourers to finish their schooling and a basic level of education before eventually returning to work life. In this manner, I hope to use my skills as a lawyer to assist these sections of my society to the best of my abilities.

I am also a firm believer of truth and therefore, I want to be the voice of those who are left unheard, and whose fate is often left in the hands of those who do them injustice. As a lawyer, I want to work towards such reforms where the weak are given just as much prerogative as the rich. For example, when the bureaucratic grip of the rich is strong, then the voices of the weak are drowned out. As a lawyer I believe it to be my duty to the people of this country to be given the same rights and I want to set right a path for other lawyers to follow.