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Northumbria students join human rights delegation to Colombia

Two law students from Northumbria University, Newcastle, are getting set to travel to Colombia to learn more about the challenges faced by human rights lawyers.

Hannah Burton and Lisa McGrady will be joining the Colombian Caravana UK Lawyers Group as it travels out to the country in August.

s members of the university's Human Rights Society, Hannah and Lisa will be part of a delegation of more than 60 lawyers from the UK, the USA, Canada,

Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Spain and Germany.

Opportunities such as this are actively promoted by Northumbria because they significantly enhance the learning experience and career prospects for its students

Hannah and Lisa will hear testimonies from lawyers and their clients, which will help foster a greater understanding of international legal issues, and knowledge exchange between cultures.

James Gray, principal lecturer at Northumbria Law School said: “Students study human rights law as part of their degree but the reality of the struggle to advance and protect human rights in other countries can sometimes seem quite remote. Meeting lawyers who do this vital work is a great opportunity and will no doubt be hugely instructive. Hannah and Lisa will also be demonstrating to their fellow students the value of contributing to student initiatives like the Human Rights Society.”

Northumbria University’s link with the Human Rights Society began when Sara Chandler, chair of the Caravana, approached students about setting up a sub-group of the university’s human rights society.

The University’s human rights society has since hosted fundraising activity for the charity, including a salsa night, which raised more than £200 for the cause.

Students Hannah and Lisa have each secured a Law School travel award to allow them to go on the trip.

Lisa, 22, from Downpatrick in County Down, Northern Ireland, has just completed the M Law Exempting (Bar Professional Training Course).

She said: “Human rights started as just an interest for me but it’s developed into a passion. The trip will give us first-hand experience of the challenges faced by lawyers who have suffered human rights violations, of how conflicts are addressed and we’ll find out in real terms how that affects people. It’s going to be an amazing experience.”

Hannah, 22, from Howden in Yorkshire, has also just completed the M Law

Exempting (Bar Professional Training Course).

She said: "It's going to be a very challenging trip but will be extremely beneficial. Speaking to people in Colombia will be completely different to anything we could experience in the UK and will give us a completely different perspective on the struggles people face."

Professor Sara Chandler, chair of the Colombia Caravana UK Lawyers Group said: "Hannah and Lisa are demonstrating their commitment to human rights in a most valuable way. First-hand knowledge of the context in which human rights lawyers face the daily challenge of their work will enable them to consolidate the work of the University's Human Rights Society in a practical way.

"Their support means that lawyers at risk can continue to represent the victims of gross human rights violations knowing they have a network of international lawyers at their side." The Colombia Caravan trip takes place from 23 to 31 August. For more information visit www.colombiancaravana.org.uk

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