

SPOTLIGHT

# Pro bono secondments focused on peace

How we're strengthening our relationship with PILPG.



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## Pro bono secondments focused on peace

**As conflicts rage around the world, the need for legal assistance to promote peace and advance transitional justice is substantial.**

Non-profit organization, the Public International Law and Policy Group (PILPG), is helping to do just that. It provides free legal assistance to parties holding peace negotiations, drafting post-conflict constitutions, assisting refugees and displaced persons, and prosecuting war crimes.

Counsel and Director of Pro Bono Lou O'Neill explains: "PILPG relies on the pro bono support of law firms, including White & Case. We've been partnering with PILPG for more than a decade, but we recently deepened the relationship with the introduction of pro bono secondments."

New York Arbitration Partner Ank Santens adds: "When the opportunity for secondments with PILPG came up I was delighted, because the work PILPG does is so relevant to our International Arbitration Group."

"We agreed to do this on a rolling basis with a series of short, three-month secondments which began in September 2022 when Washington, D.C. Associate Francis Levesque was seconded to PILPG."

Francis says: "It was great to be able to contribute to such a worthwhile and rewarding cause."

"The secondment allowed me to completely immerse myself in PILPG and to contribute to a variety of interesting, worthwhile projects."



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LOU O'NEILL, COUNSEL  
AND DIRECTOR OF PRO BONO

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ANK SANTENS, PARTNER, NEW YORK

NATIONS UNIES



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FRANCIS LEVESQUE, ASSOCIATE,  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Unsurprisingly, the ongoing war in Ukraine is the focus of much of PILPG's current work. It is currently advising the Ukrainian government with research into the legal challenges surrounding future peace negotiations, possible mechanisms to finance the reconstruction of Ukraine, and the legal basis for the reintegration of the country, among other things.

Other ongoing PILPG projects involve the creation of a transitional justice plan relating to Iran, and ongoing assistance to the Rohingya people.

New York Associate Su Rao, who began her three-month secondment in January this year, says: “Our work with PILPG includes writing white papers and client memoranda, leading working groups, helping with draft legislation, and generally supporting the PILPG team with a lot of complex legal analysis.

“As a junior lawyer, it was helpful training to be on calls where I might be the only lawyer who had specific knowledge of the issue being discussed. It is valuable because they relied on me to think on my feet and provide timely legal advice.

“These are long running projects so, in many cases, one secondees will pick up on work that the previous secondees has been doing. This requires close collaboration, but we kept in touch well and supported one another during the transition period.”

Su handed over to London-based Associate Ivan Philippov in April, illustrating the international scope of the secondments.

Paris Partner Kirsten Odynski explains: “The projects PILPG work on are global, so secondees can be based anywhere in the world. I've been working with PILPG myself since around 2016 and, as Su's secondment was due to finish, Ank reached out to ask if anyone from EMEA be interested in doing the next one.”

London Partner and Head of the Public and International Law Industry Group Andrea Menaker suggested Ivan would be a good candidate and he jumped at the chance.

# PILPG

*A Global Pro Bono Law Firm*

## Fast facts



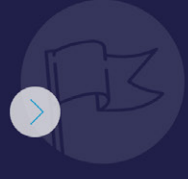
PILPG was founded  
in London in 1995



PILPG operates in  
around 25  
countries



It has provided \$20 million  
worth of pro bono legal  
assistance in the past 20  
years



PILPG has been involved in  
more than 24 peace  
negotiations





He says: "Getting the opportunity to work with PILPG is fantastic, because their work is so meaningful and high profile. It's nice to feel we're helping an organization that is trying to do some good in the world, plus the work I've been doing is very relevant to my normal work as an arbitration lawyer."

Su says: "From the feedback from PILPG, it is clear that they really appreciate our support. They are extremely busy, so having skilled lawyers with the capacity to jump into projects and take initiative really helps."

Ivan adds: "The feedback I've received is that PILPG is impressed at how quickly we've integrated and carried projects forward."

"From my point of view, it's also been a great chance to build a network of contacts. PILPG excels at putting us in touch with people, both from the private and public sector, and this can only benefit the Firm going forward. Ultimately, the secondments will bring PILPG and the Firm together in a much deeper way."

Francis also recognizes the value of the secondment from a personal development perspective.

He says: "What I loved was that I got the chance to interview and interact with such interesting people, including former US generals and former ambassadors, very senior people with so much experience."



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KIRSTEN ODYNSKI,  
PARTNER, PARIS

**"As a junior lawyer, it was helpful training to be on calls where I might be the only lawyer who had specific knowledge of the issue being discussed."**

SU RAO, ASSOCIATE, NEW YORK



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IVAN PHILIPPOV,  
ASSOCIATE, LONDON

"It was challenging because, as an arbitration lawyer, I'm used to working on one big deal at a time, but at PILPG we worked on so many different project and things were changing every day. It was extremely rewarding and I feel privileged to have played a role in such meaningful work."

"From the Firm's perspective, the secondments are also extremely relevant to what we do, as we continue to grow our public and international law practice."

The Firm intends to continue the secondments and is looking for other associates who would like to get involved.

Ank says: "We're looking for associates across the globe, so if you are interested, please get in touch."

"The beauty of our work with PILPG is that it can be done from anywhere in the world and is remote, so it's an invaluable chance to do a pro bono secondment and make a difference on some hugely relevant, high-profile projects."

Kirsten adds: "The fact the Firm can offer this type of pro bono secondment opportunity is one of the reasons I joined White & Case and it's increasingly important when it comes to recruiting and retaining the best people."