



## WORK EXPERIENCE WITH RENÉ CASSIN

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**Have a read and find out what our brilliant work experience students have been doing with us this Summer...**

**Kezia Niman** – *'I have learned a great deal in the short amount of time'*

Work experience at René Cassin has given me the opportunity to develop my understanding of issues that I feel passionately about like human trafficking and the rights of refugees and asylum seekers. I was also encouraged to develop my own project proposals to try and tackle these issues, which I thoroughly enjoyed. Creating projects gave me a chance to think creatively and contribute directly to René Cassin's initiatives which enforce human rights and improve people's lives.

Another aspect of work experience which was very interesting was doing research on how the media reports human rights related issues. For example, The Daily Mail's coverage of the proposed replacement of the Human Rights Act with a British Bill of Rights was both galling and fascinating. They seemingly ignored the fact that this move might [weaken human rights in the UK](#). This gave me a better perspective on how the majority of people might view human rights related topics.

I also enjoyed being in the meetings which took place at the office as it was interesting to see projects being developed and learn about the inner-workings of a charity. A member of the 'Remembering Eleanor Rathbone' group came in and it was very inspiring to hear about the life and work of their namesake as she did so much for refugees during the 1930s and 40s. This also highlighted the similarities between the way refugees are treated in this country now and 70 years ago, further indicating the changes that need to be made in order to make the system fairer.

I have learned a great deal in the short amount of time that I've been working at René Cassin about a plethora of issues, from the rights of Roma people to modern day slavery. This has enabled me to further my knowledge about human rights and I hope to continue my involvement with René Cassin by joining one of its campaign groups.



**Soroh Leah Gluck** – *‘Most of all I learnt why human rights are important, especially as Jews.’*

I first heard of René Cassin when they came to my school at a volunteering fair. The intern representing them explained what the charity does helping to protect the fundamental rights of the most vulnerable in society. At the time I had been following closely the refugee crisis and like with every humanitarian issue, I felt powerless to help and hated it. René Cassin would give me the opportunity to actually do something, so I decided to apply for a week work experience there (it also had the appeal of doubling as volunteer work, helping me towards my vInspired Award).

At René Cassin I have learnt a lot:

- I learnt about the legislative process when I attended a meeting in Parliament led by the Refugee Council. It was there that I also learnt how asylum seekers in the UK are being failed by inefficient administration.
- I researched anti-slavery campaigns in the UK and found out about the horrors that are happening in modern day Britain, but also what was being done to help, for example the NSPCC's Project ICARUS that works across borders to prevent child trafficking.
- I learnt about how parts of the Jewish community are helping refugees when I attended a 'Refugee Taskforce' and saw how they work both inside and outside the Jewish community in a practical way (trips to Calais) as well as political campaigning.
- I learnt which Members of Parliament (MP) are helpful to promoting human rights when updating the MP database. I was saddened to see how many of Theresa May's new cabinet opposed the Human Rights Act.
- I learnt about the implications of 'Brexit' on human rights when I attended an Equality and Diversity Forum meeting led by David Isaac, the new head of the Equality and Human Rights Commission. It was there that I also met many other British charities that help promote equality and human rights.
- I learnt about how René Cassin promotes its cause online by helping to manage their twitter account
- I learnt about the plight of Romanian Roma travellers when meeting with Maria Bata who is working to support Roma communities in Europe.



Most of all I learnt why human rights are important, especially as Jews. It's our job to promote kindness and goodness in the world and that means looking beyond our community. There are so many groups whose human rights are being exploited: Roma children living in filth, Syrian refugees being detained, people who are brought from Taiwan to be used for slave labour and many more. René Cassin helps these people and that's why I'm proud to have worked here. I look forward to helping them with future projects.

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**Jessica Roitman** – *'One of my highlights of the week was being able to attend a Human Rights and Business Joint Committee hearing in Parliament'*

When René Cassin came to my school during a volunteering workshop I was immediately drawn to their stall. Their beliefs in acting on behalf of those who are either legally or physically unable to stand up for themselves was extremely appealing to me.

I applied for work experience there so I could see first-hand the work that is being done within this organisation. When getting in contact with the team, they were very enthusiastic about allowing me to volunteer with them, which made me excited to start.

During my week's work experience, I was pleasantly surprised as to how much responsibility I was able to carry out each day. The opportunities of making my own significant contribution to the organisation differed day-to-day, making my experience not only valuable to them, but also to myself as I learnt new skills every day. These skills included: research skills in the media on a range of interesting topics, data-base organisation/inputting, drafting letters to high powered politicians and attending staff meetings.

My work experience allowed me to explore not only the specific areas of René Cassin's work, such as their work on refugees and modern day slavery but also to my own personal areas of interest within human rights, for example the humanitarian issues of human-trafficking and asylum seekers. My research also enlightened me on the legal aspects of the Human Rights Act.

One of my highlights of the week was being able to attend a Human Rights and Business Joint Committee hearing in Parliament. This was such a unique experience that I was fortunate to take part in during my work experience week that I will always remember.



René Cassin's ethos of working to promote human rights based on the Jewish experience of persecution is something that resonates deeply for me. I believe that it is our duty to help those in need, not only as people with sympathy, but as Jewish people with empathy of the hardships that, for example, refugees are currently going through similar to what Jews have experienced.

I personally am so thankful for this invaluable experience I have gone through this week. It has taught me the greater meanings and inner workings of human rights, giving me deeper insight to world issues and concerns into human rights. Most importantly it has shown me the great work that is being done towards the fight for human rights globally and how I am able to contribute to it through Human Rights NGO's like René Cassin.

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**Julia Pieza** – *‘Within the Jewish community human rights are valued as they are inherently linked to the vast history of the Jewish people.’*

Throughout this year the issues concerning human rights have been at the forefront of my thoughts. The refugee crisis and possibility of a new British Bill of Rights made me aware of the work and commitment required to protect fundamental civil liberties. Reaching out to René Cassin was a great decision that fulfilled my commitment to human rights in a tangible way. After picking up many cards advertising work experience from a school volunteering fair, René Cassin stood out as the best place for me to learn about human rights. The opportunity to grasp the reality of the threats to human rights today has taught me much about the invaluable work of charities and NGOs.

As part of my work experience I have achieved a much wider understanding of the political and international climate regarding human rights. Reading about the role of the new Government and changing policy as a result of ‘Brexit’ has undoubtedly placed human rights in an atmosphere of uncertainty. Thus the roles of charities and NGOs are vital to ensure fundamental human rights remain upheld.

Reading various opinions on current international threats to human rights such as the Turkey coup, has been a fascinating lesson in the ways in which human rights can, unfortunately, so easily fall into the interpretation of the state. During my research it became clear that leaders in Europe and around the world should come together to condemn Turkey's arbitrary crackdown on over 2,700 judges. I researched modern day slavery through documents



as well as articles which investigated the issues of human trafficking. I was inspired to see many journalists thoroughly investigating the issues of modern day slavery and bringing awareness of an issue largely ignored on a daily basis.

Attending a hearing of the Joint Committee on Human Rights and Business in Parliament, with Peter Frankental the Economic Relations Director of Amnesty International UK has been an eye-opening experience. Britain's new trade agreements after Brexit will require the country to set the 'gold standard' for human rights in business which can have a significant impact on many countries around the world. Placing pressure on the government is necessary to ensure that in times of economic uncertainty we do not diminish our record for promoting human rights.

Drafting a letter to the new Secretary of State for Justice, Liz Truss, enabled me to see the ways in which René Cassin operates by getting into contact with the government. Contributing to René Cassin by creating interactive ways for students my age to learn about human rights has given me a way to share my ideas which have been listened to and appreciated. It has also made me realise the importance of education in schools about human rights which we often take for granted.

The positive atmosphere of the office has made my work experience motivate me to continue participating in projects to help protect human rights. Within the Jewish community human rights are valued as they are inherently linked to the vast history of the Jewish people. This is why René Cassin as a Jewish human rights charity is committed to helping refugees, protecting human rights whilst fighting for equal rights for Gypsy and Roma travellers. During a time of political and economic uncertainty René Cassin has emphasised, to me and many others, why we cannot ignore our moral obligations to those less fortunate.