

## **JOB DESCRIPTION: HEAD OF LEGAL**

### **Organisation Overview**

The Human Dignity Trust (HDT) is a legal charity based in London, UK that supports local lawyers and human rights defenders to uphold human rights and constitutional law in countries where private, consensual sexual conduct between adults of the same sex is criminalised. At present, 73 jurisdictions worldwide maintain these criminal laws, a figure that is gradually decreasing due to a combination of litigation and legislative reform.

Legal provisions that criminalise lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people put them beyond the protection of the law, fostering a climate of fear, stigma and violence. These provisions violate constitutional and international human rights law, including a person's right to dignity, equality, non-discrimination and privacy.

The HDT provides pro bono technical legal assistance and advisory services at the request of, and in collaboration with, local human rights defenders, their lawyers and other partners who wish to use the courts to challenge these persecutory laws. We also analyse and may implement options for technical legal assistance for legislative reform. Since our inception in 2011, we have worked on ongoing, prospective and concluded litigation or general legal analyses with local partners in 21 different countries in all regions of the world. Our work is highly sensitive and is often conducted entirely in confidence and not made public, in order to protect the best interests of our local partners and the wider LGBT community in countries where we work. We understand the sensitivities and complexities of litigation as a tool for change and work holistically across legal, media, communications and security strategies, with our local partners always in the driver's seat.

### **Purpose of the post**

Working under the direction of and in close collaboration with the Director, the Head of Legal will assist in the development of and take a lead role in implementing the Trust's legal strategy. This will include facilitating litigation to challenge laws criminalising consensual same-sex sexual conduct – as well as other repressive governmental actions that are justified on the basis of the criminal law – as a violation of constitutional and international human rights law. The Head of Legal will work closely with local groups and individuals around the world who are seeking to develop legal strategies, as well as local lawyers and other national, regional and international partners and stakeholders. The cases we support may be brought in domestic, regional and international courts and tribunals. The Head of Legal will provide the link between the HDT's Legal Panel and the local lawyers, community groups and affected individuals with whom we work. Our Legal Panel is comprised of 25 international law firms who work *pro bono* on cases we support. The Head of Legal will guide, oversee and ensure the effectiveness of all of their legal work.

The Head of Legal will manage a portfolio of cases on which s/he will be expected to work both in close collaboration with the Director and with a high degree of autonomy and will be expected to initiate new cases in close discussion with the Director. The Head of Legal will also help manage legal research and administrative tasks related to the HDT's work.

This is a core, senior role with immense opportunity for an experienced lawyer to make a real impact globally. The Head of Legal will be highly motivated and excited by the opportunity to be part of a young but established organisation and to help maintain and further develop its excellent reputation in the field. The Head of Legal will be able to work in a fast-paced environment in which s/he will be expected to produce high-quality work at a consistent rate.

The Head of Legal will be expected to help recruit and work closely with an evolving team of project managers, researchers, interns and volunteers, however the Head of Legal will not have line management relationships with these staff members.

Regrettably, as a consequence of the nature of the work that HDT carries out, the Head of Legal will be subjected to distressing critiques of LGBT identities and the Head of Legal will have to tolerate this with tact and professionalism.

### **Duties**

The Head of Legal's main duties include the following:

#### Litigation and legal work

- Assisting in the development of, and implementing, the litigation strategy agreed by the Director and HDT's trustees
- Maintaining and managing HDT's existing portfolio of filed and planned legal cases
- Helping to identify new cases for litigation and commissioning legal analyses from our Legal Panel in preparation
- Managing new requests for support and advice from individuals and NGOs and ensuring thorough and sophisticated legal assessments of prospective cases using internal protocols
- Editing legal briefs and other litigation materials as required
- Engaging and working closely with HDT's Legal Panel to develop legal advice both on specific cases and more generally on domestic, comparative and international law as they relate to the criminalisation of consensual same sex sexual conduct and related legal issues
- Working with HDT's Legal Panel and other lawyers in facilitating test case litigation
- Supporting local lawyers in bringing and preparing for legal challenges and court hearings
- Working with representatives from local LGBT communities and supporting them in analysing, preparing for and bringing legal challenges
- Undertaking or supervising legal and factual research
- Reviewing proposed legal strategies and arguments with the Director and the Board's Litigation Sub-Committee
- Following up on cases and analysing case outcomes
- Assisting in the coordination of HDT's complementary work on local media and communications strategies and local security assessments and planning, in connection with any of our legal work, in close collaboration with the Head of Strategic Communications
- Feeding in as needed to HDT's new work to research, analyse and implement options for technical legal assistance for legislative reform, in close collaboration with the Programme Manager, Legislative Reform

## Project management

- Assisting in the management of special projects run from time to time by HDT and its partner organisations
- Assisting in the production of reports on the performance of grants, particularly by providing updates on legal work

## Other

- General on-going liaison and relationship building with HDT's Legal Panel, Bar Panel, local lawyers, local partners and other international partners and stakeholders
- Representing HDT at meetings, conferences, workshops and to other international organisations as may be required
- Producing activity reports as may be required
- Providing material for HDT's website
- Reporting to the Director, the Board of Trustees and any committees of the Board from time to time as may be required, including convening periodic meetings of the Board's Litigation Sub-Committee
- Any other tasks/duties as reasonably required by the Director.

## **Skills, Experience and Qualifications**

### *Essential skills and experience*

- Demonstrated experience working as a litigation lawyer, preferably with human rights or public international law experience
- A proven understanding of international human rights law and its mechanisms and application
- Litigation experience using domestic, regional and/or international human rights instruments
- Very high attention to detail and ability to critically assess and edit legal submissions
- Fluency in English with excellent writing, editorial, and oral advocacy skills
- Demonstrated ability to work well in a diverse multi-cultural environment and with sensitivity to diverse local cultures and contexts
- Ability to manage effectively multiple cases and projects in a fast-paced environment
- Proven ability to work well in a small team
- Pleasant, diplomatic manner and disposition in interacting with senior management and colleagues at all levels, a diverse range of local partners, and the general public
- Ability to work well both independently and with others

- Integrity, professional discretion and ability to handle confidential matters
- Strong commitment to equality and human rights

*Desired skills and experience*

- Demonstrated experience in managing multi-country legal and human rights programmes
- Familiarity with any of the geographic regions in which HDT works
- Experience of working in different legal systems
- Knowledge and experience of the global LGBT human rights movement and developments

*Qualifications*

- Qualified lawyer
- Advanced degree in human rights law or equivalent experience
- Admitted to legal practice (not necessarily in the United Kingdom)

**TO APPLY**

To apply please send a CV of no more than four pages along with a covering letter of no more than two pages explaining how you meet the Skills, Experience and Qualifications for this position to: Chris Atkinson at [administrator@humandignitytrust.org](mailto:administrator@humandignitytrust.org).

All offers of employment will be conditional on the candidate having/securing the right to work in the UK prior to their employment commencing.

Please do not submit an application if you do not meet the Essential Skills and Experience and the Qualifications. Please note that due to the volume of applications we receive, we are only able to respond to those candidates who are shortlisted for an interview.

We are an equal opportunities employer and welcome applications from all suitably qualified persons.