

Ms. Sarah Leah Whitson is the Executive Director of the Middle East and North Africa division of Human Rights Watch, an independent human rights and international humanitarian law monitoring organization, headquartered in New York City, with regional Middle East offices in Cairo, Jerusalem and Beirut. In that capacity, she supervises the research and reporting of the staff, represents the division in meetings with government officials, and responds to interview requests from the media. The MENA staff includes 16 professionals covering 16 countries in the region.

In recent years, the division has reported extensively on the conduct of states and armed groups in the conflicts in Iraq, Israel, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and Lebanon; the organization's work documenting the impact of cluster munitions in Lebanon has succeeded in spurring a global campaign to ban the weapon. Ms. Whitson recently led landmark investigations of human rights conditions in Libya and Saudi Arabia, and oversaw the first comprehensive prison investigations in Jordan. She has overseen over 20 research missions in the region and edited the resulting reports.

In addition to her work at Human Rights Watch, Ms. Whitson previously conducted numerous human rights missions in the Middle East, including missions for the Center for Economic and Social Rights, Harvard Study Team and International Study Team missions examining the impact of war and sanctions on the Iraqi civilian population, the International Human Rights Law Group's election-monitoring mission in Kurdish-controlled Northern Iraq, and a fact-finding mission in Southern Lebanon for Madre.

Ms. Whitson has given lectures and presentations at universities and conferences both in the United States and the Middle East. She has appeared as a frequent commentator on domestic and international print, radio and television news.

Prior to joining Human Rights Watch, she worked as an attorney in New York for Goldman, Sachs & Co. and Cleary, Gottlieb, Steen & Hamilton. Ms. Whitson graduated from Harvard Law School (JD, '91) and the University of California at Berkeley (BA, 88).