

International Bar Association Resolution on Non-Discrimination in Legal Practice



the global voice of
the legal profession

The International Bar Association

Being composed of over 18,000 individual members in 183 countries and of 173 Law Societies and Bar Associations together representing more than 2.5 million lawyers,

Having as a principal aim and objective the encouragement of discussion of problems relating to professional organisation and practice,

Committed to a belief in the rule of law and the promotion and protection of human rights,

Supporting the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights relating to equality and non-discrimination, in particular Article 7 (all people are equal before the law and are entitled to the equal protection of the law) and Article 23 (everyone has the right to just and favourable conditions of work),

Noting that many countries are also signatories to other human rights instruments containing similar obligations, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women,

Noting that many nations have domestic legislative requirements relating to non-discrimination and equal treatment,

Noting that only 15% of lawyers' associations throughout the world have guidelines or ethical rules for the non-discriminatory practice of the law,

Believing that all lawyers should accept that they are legally and ethically accountable for their professional practices which result in unfair discrimination,

Recognising that a balance must be drawn between the ethics of law as a profession and the practice of law as a business,

Convinced of the unique position of lawyers in society as role models and agents for change based on recognised standards of fairness and social justice.

Now Hereby Resolve

1. **That** all legal practitioners be made aware of the ethical and legal obligations pertaining to the practice of the law in their dealings with all people with whom they and their staff come into professional contact, and encourages the respective professional associations to take the lead in this endeavour.
2. **That** as all people are born equal in dignity and are recognised as having rights, urges members of the legal profession to treat all people with whom they come into professional contact without discrimination or harassment, such as on the grounds of race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, parenthood, pregnancy, language, disability, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, caste, birth or other status.
3. **That** as lawyers are role models for social justice in their respective communities, enjoins members of the legal profession to adopt an educative role with respect to avoidance of discrimination and harassment through their professional demeanour.
4. **That** all associations responsible for the standards of the legal profession which have not yet considered the formulation and enforcement of non-discriminatory practice guidelines are encouraged to do so as soon as possible.

(Adopted by the Council of the International Bar Association on 13 September, 1998, at Vancouver)

