Report of the Coalition for The International Day of the Endangered Lawyer

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF THE LAWYERS

24 January 2026 – 16th Edition

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1- INTRODUCTION

A. Background

In 2026, the Day of the Endangered Lawyer (DEL) will mark its 16th anniversary. Since its inception in 2010, the DEL has been observed annually on 24 January in memory of the Madrid Atocha massacre of 1977, when four labour lawyers and one of their administrative officers were murdered by right-wing extremists in Spain. This serves as a stark reminder of the dangers faced by legal professionals.

Over time, the DEL has evolved beyond commemoration to become a platform for collective advocacy. The DEL seeks to build awareness of the serious risks confronting lawyers simply for practising their profession.

Various legal associations, bar associations, and networks of legal defenders have formed a coalition for the DEL to organise actions across jurisdictions to mark the day. Every year, a particular country is selected as the focus country for the DEL, to concentrate attention on the specific challenges lawyers face there. Past years have focused on Turkey, the Philippines, Iran, Afghanistan, and Belarus, among others. On and around 24 January, solidarity events, panel discussions, public demonstrations or protests, press conferences, and joint statements are mobilised to coincide with advocacy and media outreach. These events have both symbolic and practical impact.

The normative foundation of the DEL lies in both international and regional frameworks for justice. Central among them is the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (Basic Principles), adopted in 1990, which set out States' obligations to safeguard the independence, freedom of expression, and protection of lawyers from harassment.

Additionally, the newly adopted Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer (Luxembourg Convention) provides further recognition that countries must guarantee that lawyers can carry out their professional duties without undue interference. These texts serve as the legal bedrock upon which critiques of State conduct are constructed and advocacy is grounded.

The United States (US) has been chosen as the focus country for the DEL in 2026. This choice is emblematic of the fact that threats to lawyers are not confined to countries with political

systems widely acknowledged as authoritarian or fragile. Threats can also emerge within political systems that have been generally perceived as established democracies.

It is true that in the US, as in every country, lawyers representing marginalised groups or unpopular clients have long faced challenges and obstacles to their work. Yet what must be stressed today is that such attacks have become systematic in the US. The purpose of our focus on the US is to question the assumption that lawyers in the US enjoy an unassailable professional shield, and to reveal how systemic pressures and institutional shifts have seriously eroded that presumption. This report outlines the applicable legal framework, examines the current environment for legal professionals in the US, provides an overview of emblematic cases of lawyers under threat, and concludes with demands and recommendations designed to ensure compliance with international standards.

B. Why Focus on the United States?

The US has long been held up in legal discourse as a model of constitutional governance, judicial independence, and civil liberties. Yet, within that framework, persistent tensions and structural vulnerabilities have always existed—around racial inequality, prosecutorial discretion, executive overreach, and the limits of access to legal representation. In recent years, however, critics and observers argue that these tensions have intensified in scope and severity, creating a novel convergence of pressures on the legal profession that merits our sustained scrutiny.

Selecting the US as the 2026 focus country for DEL does not suggest that attacks on lawyers are new or unique there. Rather, it asserts an escalation in pressures — legal, political, symbolic, and institutional — that demand collective international attention. The choice underscores the principle that no jurisdiction, however entrenched in rule-of-law rhetoric, is immune to backsliding. Several dynamics further justify this focus.

First, the executive interventions into the professional space of law firms are a new phenomenon. These interventions— via executive orders exerting control over security clearances, entrance into federal buildings and other severe limitations on lawyers—are now wielded as instruments of political power against those who litigate against or criticise the government. These are not random episodes, but part of a broad campaign to subordinate adversarial legal practice to political norms eschewing challenge or critical opinion.

Second, judicial independence itself has come under increased assault. The mounting barrage of politicised criticism directed at judges include threats of removal, calls for impeachment, and efforts to delegitimise unfavourable rulings. These have begun to corrode the institutional insulation of the judiciary from executive interference. Moreover, politicised criticism of judges is also associated with increased threats of physical violence against judges and their family members.

Third, we perceive the growth of a chilling effect on legal advocacy. Many law firms — even those that were once bold in taking public-interest or politically risky cases — now confront implicit incentives to self-censor. Lawyers representing marginalised clients (for instance, in immigration, LGBTQ+ rights, civil liberties, or Palestinian rights advocacy) report intensified scrutiny, reputational damage, professional marginalisation, or threats of disciplinary or administrative retaliation. Simultaneously, prosecutors at various levels have faced pressures to align prosecutorial discretion with political party agenda, undergo reassignments, suffer partisan questioning, or experience threatened or actual dismissal, undermining their independence.

Fourth, the US administration's unprecedented refusal to participate in the UN Universal Periodic Review of the US on 7 November 2025,[1] a core UN Human Rights Council accountability tool, combined with its 4 February 2025 Executive Order initiating a review of US participation in international organisations and directing withdrawal from all deemed contrary to US interests,[2] leading to its 7 January 2026 Executive Order mandating withdrawal from 66 international organisations (including 35 non-UN entities and 31 UN-affiliated organisations),[3] signals a deepening retreat from international accountability and reduces access to recognised international legal frameworks for lawyers and individuals, both domestically and internationally.

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[1] See Human Rights Council reschedules human rights review of the United States of America; regrets "non-cooperation" with UPR mechanism (Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 7 Nov. 2025), https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/11/human-rights-council-reschedules-human-rights-review-united-states-america.

[2] See Executive Order 14199, Withdrawing the United States from and Ending Funding to Certain United Nations Organizations and Reviewing United States Support to All International Organizations (The White House, 4 Feb. 2025), https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/withdrawing-the-united-states-from-and-ending-funding-to-certain-united-nations-organizations-and-reviewing-united-states-support-to-all-international-organizations/.

[3] See Presidential Memorandum, Withdrawing the United States from International Organizations, Conventions, and Treaties that Are Contrary to the Interests of the United States (The White House, 7 Jan. 2026), https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2026/01/withdrawing-the-united-states-from-international-organizations-conventions-and-treaties-that-are-contrary-to-the-interests-of-the-united-states/.

Although the US has strong constitutional guarantees of free speech, due process, and judicial independence, these do not automatically ensure protection for lawyers who challenge State power or engage in politically sensitive advocacy. Emerging threats raise serious concerns about the erosion of space for independent legal practice.

2- International Law and Standards on the Role and Protection of Lawyers

A. Overview and Applicability to the US

The independence and protection of lawyers in the US must be assessed in light of binding international human rights treaties, instruments, and its own domestic law. As a State Party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the US is obliged to uphold fundamental guarantees concerning access to justice (Article 14), due process and fair trials (Articles 9 and 14), freedom of expression (Article 19), and freedom of association (Article 22). These protections are also enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), particularly Articles 7 (equality before the law), 8 (right to an effective remedy), 10 (right to a fair and public hearing), 19 (freedom of opinion and expression), and 20 (freedom of peaceful assembly and association).

In addition to these core texts, a range of international and regional instruments provide globally recognised standards for interpreting and implementing the above rights. Instruments such as the UN Basic Principles and the Luxembourg Convention offer detailed guidance on the structural and functional guarantees required to protect the independence of the legal profession.

These frameworks serve as authoritative interpretations of how to give practical effect to rights enshrined in binding instruments like the ICCPR. Taking these frameworks into account is consistent with established US jurisprudence that international laws are incorporated into the United States. See *The Paqueta Habana*, 175 U.S. 677 (1900) ("International law is part of our law, and must be ascertained and administered by the courts of justice of the appropriate jurisdiction, as often as questions of right depending upon it are duly presented for their determination."); *Murray v. The Schooner Charming Betsy*, 6 U.S. (2 Cranch) 64, 118 (1804) (". . . ought never to be construed to violate the law of nations if any other possible construction remains, and consequently can never be construed to violate neutral rights, or to affect neutral commerce, further than the law of nations as is understood in this country."). In doing so, these frameworks help safeguard the rights of both lawyers and their clients and reinforce the broader justice system's capacity to uphold access to justice, fair

trial guarantees, and the rule of law. Together with the jurisprudence and findings of international and regional human rights bodies, these frameworks also help clarify the practical dimensions of States' duties to protect lawyers and bar associations from undue interference.

B. United Nations Framework

The UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, welcomed by consensus of the UN General Assembly in 1990, constitute the foundational international instrument concerning the legal profession. While the Basic Principles are not a binding treaty, they are authoritative norms enshrined in binding international treaties and national legislation. The UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers has described the Basic Principles as representing "the most comprehensive international normative framework aimed at safeguarding the right of access to legal assistance and the independent functioning of the legal profession."

These principles establish that "[a]ll persons are entitled to call upon the assistance of a lawyer of their choice to protect and establish their rights and to defend them in all stages of criminal proceedings" (Principle 1). The Basic Principles emphasise that lawyers must be able to perform all professional functions "without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference" (Principle 16a). Lawyers must not face criminal or disciplinary sanctions for actions carried out in accordance with recognised professional duties, ethical standards, and the law (Principle 16c). Crucially, "lawyers shall not be identified with their clients or their clients' causes as a result of discharging their functions" (Principle 18), and retain "the right to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights" without professional repercussions (Principle 23).

When lawyers face criminal or disciplinary proceedings, Principles 27 to 29 require that such processes be handled by independent and impartial bodies, in full compliance with due process and professional codes of conduct, and subject to judicial oversight. These safeguards are essential to prevent the misuse of disciplinary mechanisms or criminal law to retaliate against lawyers for their professional activities.

The Basic Principles also affirm that it is a State's duty to provide "sufficient funding and other resources for legal services to the poor and, as necessary, to other disadvantaged persons" (legal aid), to ensure the right to equal access to fair trials and effective remedies. (See the UN Special Rapporteur on independence of judges and lawyers' 2013 report to the UN General Assembly and Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada's 2014 right to legal aid report).

The UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders (1998) further reinforces these protections. Article 12 makes clear that lawyers acting as human rights defenders - whether individually or through their professional associations - must be protected from retaliation, pressure, or any arbitrary action related to the lawful exercise of their work. In alignment with Principle 14 of the Basic Principles, Article 1 provides that lawyers have a duty to promote justice and human rights through the representation of their clients and participation in public discourse.

Successive UN Special Rapporteurs on the independence of judges and lawyers have consistently emphasised that lawyers must be free to express views on legal and human rights issues - including in politically sensitive contexts - without fear of retaliation. Both current and former mandate-holders have highlighted the increasing use of smear campaigns, disbarment procedures, and criminal investigations to silence lawyers who challenge dominant State narratives or represent marginalised groups. This pattern of interference has been condemned as a serious threat to the independence of the legal profession and a broader indicator of democratic backsliding. The Special Rapporteurs' reports have further underscored the urgent need for robust protective frameworks to safeguard lawyers against politicised attacks and preserve their ability to carry out their functions without intimidation or undue pressure.

The UN Human Rights Committee (HRC) has also confirmed through decisions and General Comments (particularly No. 32 on Article 14 of the ICCPR concerning fair trial rights) that legal representation is central to due process, and that States must ensure lawyers can operate freely and independently. HRC decisions have stressed the State's responsibility to protect individuals - including legal professionals - against reprisals linked to legitimate human rights work.

C. Protection of Bar Associations and Institutional Independence

International standards recognise that the institutional independence of bar associations is indispensable to the integrity of the legal profession. These associations must operate without external interference, including from State or political authorities.

Principle 24 of the UN Basic Principles affirms that lawyers are entitled to form and join self-governing professional associations to represent their interests, ensure continuing education, and safeguard their professional integrity. Similarly, the Luxembourg Convention recognises this right and explicitly states that professional associations must be protected

from undue interference and be able to safeguard the rights enshrined in the Convention (see below). The International Bar Association (IBA) Standards for the Independence of the Legal Profession also affirm that lawyers' associations must uphold justice without fear or favour (Standard 18). Similarly, the American Bar Association has adopted numerous resolutions in accord with these principles.[4]

Bar associations are not merely representative bodies - they are institutional guarantors of the legal profession's independence, tasked with defending lawyers from unjustified restrictions, safeguarding access to legal services, and curbing the abuse of State power. In the US, where bar regulation varies by state and is often linked to judicial or governmental structures, these international benchmarks highlight the need for functional autonomy and insulation from political influence, particularly where bar associations are expected to speak out on systemic issues or defend their members against retaliation.

D. Council of Europe Convention as a Global Normative Benchmark

The Luxembourg Convention (2025) - though not yet in force - provides the most comprehensive codification of legal standards protecting the legal profession. Notably, it will be open to universal ratification once it is in force, reflecting its intended global application.

The Convention reaffirms that lawyers and their associations play a fundamental role in upholding the rule of law, securing access to justice, and ensuring the protection of human rights. Its provisions build on and reinforce the UN Basic Principles:

- Article 4 requires States to ensure the functional independence of lawyers' professional associations.
- Article 7(2) affirms lawyers' right to take part in public debate on justice, legal reform, and human rights. It further obliges States to ensure that lawyers and their associations are free to promote the rule of law and participate in public discussions concerning the substance, interpretation, and application of existing and proposed legal provisions, judicial decisions, the administration of and access to justice, and the promotion and protection of human rights. Lawyers must be able to engage in these activities without facing sanctions or reprisals for their public commentary.
- Article 9(4) requires States to ensure that lawyers and their professional associations can exercise their rights under Article 7—such as engaging in public debate and advocating for human rights—without being subjected to physical attacks, threats, harassment, intimidation, or any improper interference. It further obliges States to

[4] See, e.g., ABA Resolutions 18AM106A, 18AM106B, & 23MM507.

refrain from such conduct themselves and to investigate effectively any such actions where they may amount to a criminal offence.

- Article 9(5) mandates that States refrain from adopting any measure that undermines the independence and self-governing nature of professional associations.

The Convention corresponds to Recommendation R(2000)21 of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, which also clarifies that lawyers must be protected against improper interference, including in their public advocacy and legal commentary. These standards reinforce that advocacy for legal reform and human rights is not only permissible but protected.

Although the US is not a party to the Convention, its provisions nonetheless offer a meaningful comparative framework for evaluating national practices. This is especially relevant considering growing concerns about the erosion of democratic safeguards and the rule of law in the US. The Convention provides useful guidance for assessing areas where lawyers - particularly those working on policing, immigration, reproductive rights, or national security - may face professional retaliation, reputational attacks, or politicised investigations.

E. Guidance from European Court of Human Rights Jurisprudence

The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has developed a strong body of jurisprudence affirming the legal profession's critical role in democratic societies. Although the US is neither a member of the Council of Europe nor a party to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), and thus not subject to the ECtHR's jurisdiction, the ECtHR case law nonetheless offers persuasive interpretations of what meaningful protection of lawyers entails:

- In *Tahir Elçi and Others v. Turkey*, the ECtHR held that persecution or harassment of lawyers for their professional activities strikes at the heart of the ECHR system, warning of the chilling effect on human rights defence and criminal defence work.
- In *Morice v. France*, the ECtHR affirmed that lawyers' freedom of expression is intrinsically tied to their independence and the effective functioning of the justice system.
- In *Imanov v. Azerbaijan*, the ECtHR held that disbarment for statements made to the press in relation to concerns of ill-treatment of a client, was an excessive and disproportionate penalty for statements on a matter of public interest, which violated the lawyer's right to freedom of expression (Article 10). It further found the measure violated Article 8, as it interfered with the lawyer's private life and

professional integrity. The judgment reinforces the vital role of lawyers in speaking out on client rights and alleged abuses. It also underscores that disbarment must be supported by compelling reasons and remain proportionate to the alleged misconduct.

These cases reinforce that State retaliation against lawyers - whether through criminalisation, disciplinary proceedings, or reputational attacks - undermines public confidence in the justice system and violates core human rights norms.

F. Guidance from the Inter-American Human Rights System

The Inter-American human rights system of the Organization of American States (OAS) has repeatedly affirmed that States have specific obligations to protect legal professionals from threats, harassment, or violence in the course of their work. It has also held that attacks against lawyers in retaliation for their professional activities constitute not only individual violations but also an interference with the administration of justice.

The US is a founding member of the OAS, and is bound by the Charter of the Organization of American States, which includes a proclamation of "the fundamental rights of the individual without distinction as to race, nationality, creed, or sex." In 1948, the OAS adopted the American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man (American Declaration), which defines the fundamental rights referred to in the OAS Charter, including the right to equality before the law, fair trial rights, and freedom of expression, assembly and association. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) holds that the American Declaration is binding on all OAS members due to their obligations under the OAS Charter (see, e.g., Resolution Nº 3/87, Case 9647, United States, 22 September 1987). The rulings of the IACHR and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR) confirm international normative benchmarks. The US has not ratified the American Convention on Human Rights, however, and routinely takes the position that it is not bound by the rulings of IACtHR and, by extension, the American Declaration.

In the landmark judgment, *Members of the "José Alvear Restrepo" Lawyers Collective v. Colombia* (2023), the IACtHR explicitly recognised the right to defend human rights as an autonomous right, independent of other civil or political rights. The IACtHR underscored that lawyers and human rights defenders must be able to operate without fear of retaliation, harassment, or state-sponsored surveillance. Measures such as intimidation, threats, stigmatisation, or arbitrary investigations against lawyers were found to violate both the right to personal integrity and the effective exercise of the profession.

Furthermore, the Inter-American system has highlighted the chilling effect that attacks on lawyers can have on the exercise of rights by others. Harassment or surveillance of legal professionals can deter access to justice, impede fair trial guarantees, and undermine public confidence in the legal system. For example, the IACHR Report on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders in the Americas (2006), noted that attacks, threats, harassment, or intimidation of human rights defenders, including lawyers, not only harm the direct victims but also undermine protection for their clients, thereby affecting broader access to justice.

The IACHR has also emphasised that protective measures are especially important when lawyers represent unpopular clients, challenge government authorities, or work in politically sensitive contexts, because the risk of reprisals is highest in these cases. See for example, Report on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders (2011).

3- Introduction to the US Criminal Justice System

The United States government has three distinct branches - legislative, executive, and judicial - within a constitutional system of checks and balances.

- The legislative branch comprises the Senate and House of Representatives collectively known as the Congress. Congress makes all laws and has the power to declare war, regulate interstate and foreign commerce and control tax and spending policies.
- The executive branch is led by the US President. It enforces and implements laws passed by Congress. The President also has the power to veto laws, negotiate treaties, and appoint federal officials and Supreme Court justices, with Senate approval.
- The judicial branch - with the Supreme Court at its apex, and lower courts beneath it - interprets federal laws and determines their constitutionality. The courts resolve disputes and hear cases involving laws. The judicial branch can strike down laws that conflict with the Constitution, but judges depend on the executive branch to enforce court decisions.

This tripartite structure facilitates the separation of powers and responsibilities at a federal level. The three branches are intended to cooperate to ensure a balanced, effective and fair government and to secure the protection of individuals' rights.

A. Hierarchy of Laws

The US Constitution is the supreme law of the land. It establishes the three branches of government: (1) legislative; (2) executive; and (3) judicial. The federal courts, including the

Supreme Court, appellate courts, and district courts, are a co-equal branch of the nation's government. All federal courts must abide by the US Constitution and federal law.

The US has a dual system of laws. Federal or national laws regulate matters that affect the entire country. These include issues such as national security, federal crimes, interstate commerce, immigration, and constitutional rights.

State courts must abide by the Constitution in addition to state law and state constitutions. State laws govern matters not exclusively under federal jurisdiction, such as family law, property law, state crimes, and contracts. The federal and state legal systems operate independently. The US Constitution provides that federal laws take precedence over conflicting state laws, though states have significant authority within their domains and may sometimes be more restrictive than federal law. State Constitutions can be more expansive than the US Constitution, providing a state's citizens with additional rights.

The purpose of this legal system allows for a balance of power, providing flexibility and local autonomy while maintaining national coherence. This system is also meant to ensure that legal authority is appropriately distributed, allowing laws to adapt to the needs of diverse states and regions within a large country. However, because the Supreme Court is the final authority in matters involving constitutional interpretation, it can overrule decisions by state courts on matters of federal law.

No law may violate the US Constitution, which requires, among other things, that every person or institution accused of a crime receive a fair trial, due process of law, the right to confront witnesses against the accused, the right to challenge searches that violate the Constitution, and the right to appeal from a conviction. For those accused of a serious crime, the Constitution provides for the right to a lawyer. If a defendant is entitled to a lawyer but cannot afford one, the government must provide one.

All lawyers, including those representing federal or state governments, are obligated to uphold the Constitution; and criminal defence lawyers, in particular, must be competent and independent so as to identify and challenge any constitutional violations by the prosecution (see *Strickland v. Washington*, 466 U.S. 668 (1984)*; Gideon v. Wainwright*, 372 U.S. 335 (1963)). Especially at the state level, however, appointed lawyers may be overworked and underpaid, which in turn may undermine a defendant's right to an adequate defence and due process. Empirical research has found that these pressures lead

to poorer outcomes for defendants, with higher rates of pre-trial detention and longer sentences.

Among the provisions of the US Constitution, Article VI provides that treaties are part of the "supreme Law of the Land." According to US jurisprudence, federal and state laws "ought never to be construed to violate the laws of nations [international law] if any other possible construction remains" (see *Murray v. Schooner Charming Betsy*, 6 U.S. (2 Cranch) 64 (1804)). International treaties, including the ICCPR, are thus necessary interpretive tools for US courts to consider when seeking to ensure that potentially ambiguous US domestic laws are consistent with existing US international benchmarks.

B. Appointment of Judges

The process of selecting federal judges in the US is meant to be a vital aspect of the country's system of checks and balances. It is supposed to ensure that qualified, impartial individuals serve on the federal bench, including the Supreme Court, appellate courts, and district courts.

The Constitution gives the President the power to nominate judges and the Senate the power to confirm them. Thus, the President's nomination is subject to the "advice and consent" of the Senate (see comment re Art. II). Upon appointment, a federal judge becomes a member of the judicial branch for their lifetime and can be removed only in extreme circumstances. The lifetime appointment of federal judges is designed to shield judges from undue influence, allowing them to make impartial decisions based on law and constitutional principles.

The process of selecting state court judges and determining their terms of office, varies significantly across the 50 US states. Three main methods are used to select judges: partisan elections, nonpartisan elections, and gubernatorial appointment, with some states employing a hybrid system.

C. Adversarial and Jury System

The adversarial system is also fundamental to the American legal system. Because the criminal justice system in the US is an adversarial system, the government must prove its case against a criminal defendant beyond a reasonable doubt, using fair and reliable evidence that does not violate the Constitution. The Constitution provides that a defendant has the right to confront the witnesses against him or her. Generally, the defence can put

evidence before a jury, and the defendant can testify. A defendant who chooses to testify must do so under oath. However, the defence has no obligation to prove anything and defendants' right to remain silent cannot be used against them (see US Constitution, Fifth Amendment). If the government's prosecutors cannot prove the government's case, the defendant will be acquitted and cannot be retried. The prosecution generally cannot appeal from an acquittal.

The jury system is a cornerstone of the adversarial system. The Sixth Amendment to the US Constitution generally guarantees the right to trial by an impartial jury. A jury typically consists of a group of citizens selected through a process called "voir dire," where the judge and sometimes the lawyers question potential jurors. Whereas a judge will rule on matters of law, the primary function of a jury is to determine the facts of a case and deliver a verdict based on the evidence presented during trial. A jury must deliver a unanimous verdict to convict a criminal defendant (see *Ramos v. Louisiana*, 590 U.S 83 (2020)). However, the states of Alabama and Florida allow for death sentences without a unanimous jury vote, while in Missouri, if the jury deadlocks, a judge can impose a death sentence.

The jury system is meant to embody key democratic values, including public participation in justice and protection against government overreach. It acts as a safeguard against potential abuses of judicial power by ensuring that ordinary citizens have a voice in legal decisions affecting their community. For this to work, the Supreme Court ruled in *Batson v. Kentucky*, 476 U.S. 79 (1986) that the Constitution requires a jury to include a fair cross-section of people who are similar to the defendant. Theoretically, the jury system and the adversarial system work together to protect individual rights and ensure that justice is served through a balanced and transparent process.

Historically, tensions have existed between the branches of government and the legal profession, and periods of political pressure on lawyers, judges, and institutions have occurred under various administrations. However, in recent years, these pressures have intensified in ways that raise renewed concerns about the resilience of institutional checks and balances. Shifts in legislative–executive dynamics, evolving interpretations of constitutional limits by the judiciary, and increased scrutiny of lawyers who represent individuals in conflict with government interests have all contributed to an environment in which lawyers may face obstacles in fulfilling their constitutional role.

Such developments underscore how fragile the safeguards and principles can become when lawyers fear professional or personal repercussions for advocating on behalf of their clients.

When the independence or safety of the legal profession is threatened, both the defendants and the broader justice system suffer.

These trends, which have emerged in various forms over time but have reached a heightened level of intensity during the current administration, illustrate the need for renewed vigilance in protecting the role of lawyers within the adversarial system.

4- Patterns of Interference with the Legal Profession

Throughout 2025, interventions targeting the functioning of the legal profession in the US have not appeared as isolated and sporadic administrative acts, but rather as a systematic sequence of mutually reinforcing measures driven by the same political objective. Examples include:

- Presidential Memoranda and Executive Orders that identify specific law firms and lawyers by name and title;
- government threats coercing law firms to provide a total of nearly $1 billion in "pro bono" legal services to the government and to causes favoured by the executive;[5]
- denial of immigration lawyers' access to clients;
- targeting of lawyers for representation of unpopular clients and causes;
- government attribution of clients' causes to their lawyers;
- government actions undermining client confidentiality;
- targeting of bar associations such as the American Bar Association through the revocation or denial of government funding as retribution for taking positions contrary to the government;
- targeted administrative practices, such as interrogating lawyers at the border and the unexplained withdrawal of lawyers' access to federal facilities, including courthouses; and
- arbitrary dismissals of lawyers within the Department of Justice (DOJ).

The result is a chilling climate that is inconsistent with the ICCPR, the UN Basic Principles (in particular Principles 16, 18, 20 and 24) and the Luxembourg Convention. This section examines the executive's direct methods of retaliation against the legal profession, the pattern of surveillance and harassment, politicisation within the DOJ and the judiciary, and finally the chilling impact of these processes on civil society and the right to legal representation.

A. Political Retaliation and Executive Orders Targeting Lawyers or Law Firms

A series of Presidential Memoranda and Executive Orders issued in early 2025 targeted specific law firms that played a role in, or were associated with, high-profile cases that concerned or implicated the current administration. These measures included provisions that severely restricted the exercise of the law firms' professional duties, stating for instance that a "firm's access to federal facilities is suspended," or that "the security clearances of

[5] See Law firms pledge almost $1 billion in free work to Trump (Axios, 12 April 2025), https://www.axios.com/2025/04/12/big-law-pro-bono-legal-work-trump.

lawyers working at this firm are revoked," or that "the contracts concluded by this firm with the federal government shall be reviewed." Such orders are contrary to Principles 18 and 20 of the UN Basic Principles, which prohibit lawyers from being identified with their clients or their clients' causes, precisely to avoid unjustified retaliatory actions.

Four of the targeted law firms challenged the administration's orders in federal court. All four prevailed in final trial court decisions explicitly noting the retaliatory character of the orders.[6] The government is nevertheless appealing the trial courts' decisions, continuing to press its position despite the fact that it has been soundly and uniformly rejected by the judiciary to date.[7]

A-1. Measures against Covington & Burling (25 February 2025)

The Presidential Memorandum of 25 February 2025, titled "Presidential Memorandum: Suspension of Security Clearances and Evaluation of Government Contracts," explicitly named Covington & Burling, and ordered the suspension of the firm's access to federal facilities and the review of its current federal contracts. The stated justification was that one of the firm's partners had represented former Special Counsel Jack Smith in investigations concerning President Trump (at the end of his first term of office) relating to 6 January 2021 and the classified documents cases. This amounts to imposing an administrative sanction on both the lawyer and the firm for a legitimate legal defence activity, and doing so retroactively, in violation of the international law principle of legality and Article I of the US Constitution, Section 10, which prohibit ex post facto laws.

A-2. Measures against Perkins Coie LLP (6 March 2025)

The Presidential Executive Order of 6 March 2025, titled "Addressing Risks from Perkins Coie LLP," targeted the firm on the grounds that it had represented presidential candidate Hillary Clinton's campaign in the 2016 presidential elections. It also criticised the firm's legal

[6] See Final Trial Court Opinion in Perkins Coie Case, https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/67cf71f1f27ef68a8f5c5c70/681556767aaf90530377195f_2025.05.02%20%5B185%5D%20MEMORANDUM%20OPINION%20granting%20MSJ%20and%20denying%20MTD.pdf; Final Trial Court Opinion in Jenner & Block Case, https://www.courthousenews.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/jenner-block-trump-illegal-retatliation-opinion.pdf; Final Trial Court Opinion in WilmerHale Case, https://www.courthousenews.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/wilmer-hale-judge-leon-trump-order-illegal-opinion.pdf; Final Trial Court Opinion in Susman Godfrey Case, https://cases.justia.com/federal/district-courts/district-of-columbia/dcdce/1:2025cv01107/279461/206/0.pdf?ts=1751104428.

[7] See, e.g., Justice Replaces Attorney on Big Law Executive Order Appeals (Bloomberg Law, 22 Oct. 2025), https://news.bloomberglaw.com/business-and-practice/justice-replaces-attorney-on-big-law-executive-order-appeals.

challenges to voting laws and its diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies. The Executive Order argued that this legal representation had a "confidence-undermining" effect on current federal policies and recorded that the firm's ability to conclude or maintain federal contracts could be restricted. Thus, the firm was penalised for its past political associations and legal advocacy, as well as its DEI policies.

A-3. Executive Order against Jenner & Block (25 March 2025)

The Executive Order of 25 March 2025 titled "Addressing Risks from Jenner & Block" targeted the firm along two lines: first, the firm's decision to rehire former federal prosecutor Andrew Weissmann, who had been associated with former Special Counsel Robert Mueller III who led a federal inquiry in May 2017 to examine Russian interference in the 2016 US presidential election; second, the firm's pro bono work defending trans individuals, migrants, and groups facing discrimination under DEI policies, which the order described as "activities undermining justice and the interests of the United States." The order thus interfered not only with procurement and access, but also with the substance of the firm's pro bono program.

A-4. Executive Order against WilmerHale (27 March 2025)

The 27 March 2025 Executive Order titled "Addressing Risks from WilmerHale" alleged that the firm's links to former Special Counsel Robert Mueller III and its internal DEI policies amounted to "activities contrary to U.S. interests," and ordered the suspension of security clearances of the firm's personnel and the restriction of entry to federal buildings. This order was later 'enjoined' (i.e. stopped by an preventive injunction) by a federal court, which underlined that such measures would have a "chilling effect on legal representation." This injunction is under appeal by the government.

A-5. Targeting of Elias Law Group and Marc Elias (22 March 2025)

The Presidential Memorandum of 22 March 2025 targeted Marc Elias, a widely known election lawyer, and Elias Law Group, on the ground that they had represented Democratic Party actors against election challenges at federal and state levels in 2020–2021. The memorandum described such representation as "activities undermining the legitimacy of the administration," and ordered an administrative review of the firm and the lawyer, including reconsideration of their access to federal facilities. Elias stated on the same day that this was a clear attempt to criminalise election lawyering.

A-6. "Compliance" arrangements with law firms

To date, nine law firms have agreed to provide a total of $940 million in so-called "pro bono" work toward efforts supported by the president and the executive. The law firms made these agreements to avoid executive orders or to have them removed, raising concerns about coerced compliance. For example, on 14 March 2025, an Executive Order against Paul Weiss targeted the firm for its work in civil cases concerning the events on 6 January 2021 and for its DEI policies. A few days later, it was reported that the firm agreed to provide $40 million in pro bono legal services in priority areas defined by the administration and to narrow its DEI program, in exchange for the withdrawal of the order.

On 27 March 2025, it was reported that Skadden Arps had entered into talks with the administration to avoid an executive order. In the same week, a post on X (formerly Twitter) by Elon Musk, who was at that time overseeing the US Department of Government Efficiency, named Skadden Arps and demanded the law firm to stop its litigation work against Trump-aligned figures, thus amplifying the public dimension of the campaign.

In April 2025, it was reported that Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP was likewise notified that an executive order would be applied; following this, the firm agreed to provide $100 million in pro bono legal services, in exchange for the administration's decision not to impose access or contract restrictions.

The similarity of these arrangements supports an inference that the executive applied a common template to a group of firms—turning the threat of executive measures into "negotiations" that entailed so-called "pro bono" obligations.

The Washington D.C. Bar ethics committee noted that firms that enter into agreements with the government that may limit or shape their law practices must consider whether this will create issues under the Rule of Professional conduct, such as conflict of interest, and seek waivers from certain clients. However, since the agreements as to what pro bono work the administration will demand is unclear, "knowing waivers" (i.e. a waiver based on the client's awareness of the right being abandoned, and the consequences of the abandonment) will be difficult to obtain.

A-7. Executive Order 14203 targeting the International Criminal Court (ICC) and its impact on US lawyers (6 and 9 February 2025)

Executive Order 14203 of 6 February 2025 defined the ICC's current or possible investigations into "protected persons" (the US, Israel or certain allies) as an "extraordinary

and unusual threat." The order makes the provision of direct or indirect services by US nationals to those subjected to sanctions a criminal act under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), punishable by up to 20-year prison sentences and fines of up to one million dollars. The order invoked the IEEPA as its legal basis and was motivated in part by the ICC's investigations into alleged US conduct in Afghanistan and the CIA's conduct in other countries that are members of the ICC, and by its arrest warrants for Israeli officials including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant.

To date, the executive has invoked Executive Order 14203 to impose sanctions on a total of 11 ICC judges and prosecutors – eight ICC judges, the ICC Chief Prosecutor, and two Deputy Prosecutors – in February 2025,[8] June 2025,[9] August 2025,[10] and December 2025.[11] Considering that a significant number of US lawyers work under the direction of the ICC Prosecutor and in support of the ICC judges in international criminal proceedings, these sanctions have the effect of criminalising the lawyer's professional activity, and prohibiting US NGOs and individual lawyers from contributing to the work of the ICC, even apart from the sanctions' direct impact on the named ICC judges and prosecutors.

In July 2025, sanctions were also imposed on the UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese, whose UN mandate concerns human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories; these sanctions are unprecedented.[12]

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[8] See Imposing Sanctions on the International Criminal Court (The White House, 6 Feb. 2025), https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/imposing-sanctions-on-the-international-criminal-court/.

[9] See Imposing Sanctions in Response to the ICC's Illegitimate Actions Targeting the United States and Israel (Office of the Spokesperson for the US Department of State, 5 June 2025), https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2025/06/imposing-sanctions-in-response-to-the-iccs-illegitimate-actions-targeting-the-united-states-and-israel.

[10] See Imposing Further Sanctions in Response to the ICC's Ongoing Threat to Americans and Israelis (Office of the US Secretary of State, 20 Aug. 2025), https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2025/08/imposing-further-sanctions-in-response-to-the-iccs-ongoing-threat-to-americans-and-israelis-2/; Fact Sheet: Imposing Further Sanctions in Response to the ICC's Ongoing Threat to Americans and Israelis (Office of the Spokesperson for the US Department of State, 20 Aug. 2025), https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2025/08/imposing-further-sanctions-in-response-to-the-iccs-ongoing-threat-to-americans-and-israelis/.

[11] See Sanctioning ICC Judges Directly Engaged in the Illegitimate Targeting of Israel (Office of the US Secretary of State, 18 Dec. 2025), https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2025/12/sanctioning-icc-judges-directly-engaged-in-the-illegitimate-targeting-of-israel/; see also Exclusive: US threatens new ICC sanctions unless court pledges not to prosecute Trump (Reuters, 10 Dec. 2025), https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-threatens-new-icc-sanctions-unless-court-pledges-not-prosecute-trump-2025-12-10/.

[12] See Sanctioning Lawfare that Targets U.S. and Israeli Persons (Office of the Spokesperson for the US Department of State, 9 July 2025),

In September 2025, the US issued sanctions against three legal non-governmental organisations: Al Haq, Al Mezan Center for Human Rights (Al Mezan), and the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR), that were aimed at undermining their work providing documentation and evidence at the ICC, within the scope of the ongoing investigation at the ICC in connection with war crimes and crimes against humanity in respect of the Situation in the State of Palestine. The sanctions have severe consequences for those subjected to them, including bans on travel to the US, blocking of access to US assets, denial of services by US-based corporations, as well denial of services even from non-US banks and corporations due to overcompliance.[13]

Although the US is not a party to the Rome Statute of the ICC, UN experts consider that the sanctions against ICC judges and prosecutors constitute conduct prohibited under Article 70 of the Rome Statute, which bars efforts to impede, intimidate, or retaliate against Court officials in the performance of their duties.[14] Sanctions against the UN Special Rapporteur violate the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the UN. The sanctions also violate the UDHR and the ICCPR by curtailing rights to freedom of expression, association, assembly, and due process. The sanctions create a chilling effect for lawyers in many countries, including US-based lawyers, who work for or cooperate with the ICC, who represent potential victims and thus work with the prosecution, or support the UN Human Rights Council's Special Procedures in documenting Rome Statute crimes.

A-8 Targeting of the American Bar Association

The American Bar Association (ABA) was founded in 1878 and is the largest voluntary professional association in the world. It is non-partisan and is committed to advancing the rule of law across the US and globally.

On 3 March 2025, the ABA issued a statement detailing the hostile environment for legal professionals in the country. In addition, on 16 June 2025, the ABA filed a lawsuit against the US government, more than two dozen federal departments and agencies, and the heads of

https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2025/07/sanctioning-lawfare-that-targets-u-s-and-israeli-persons.

[13] See, e.g., No Amazon, No Gmail: Trump Sanctions Upend the Lives of I.C.C. Judges (New York Times, 10 Jan. 2026), https://www.nytimes.com/2026/01/10/world/europe/icc-judges-us-sanctions-trump.html; Cut off by their banks and even iced out by Alexa, sanctioned ICC staffers remain resolute (Associated Press, 12 Dec. 2025), https://apnews.com/article/international-court-sanctions-trump-icc-hague-4cdefe4de067432f6cdb9b137908c463.

[14] See United States: UN experts condemn sanctions against the ICC (OHCHR, 10 Feb. 2025), United States: UN experts condemn sanctions against the ICC | OHCHR

those departments and agencies, contesting the administration's executive orders and memoranda targeting law firms and lawyers, charging that the executive's actions were intended to prevent the law firms and lawyers from challenging the administration in court.[15] On 11 August 2025, the ABA adopted a resolution condemning retaliatory measures directed at lawyers and law firms by the government and calling for professional solidarity.

In the same period, the DOJ[16] and the Federal Trade Commission,[17] among other federal entities, prohibited senior staff from holding leadership roles in the ABA, or even renewing their ABA membership, and barred them from participating in ABA conferences and other events. Following the administration's lead, in mid-June 2025, the Florida Supreme Court directed the Florida Bar to cease the appointment of State Bar representatives to the ABA House of Delegates.[18] Further, the administration has instructed candidates for federal judgeships not to cooperate with the ABA in its traditional judicial vetting process, including not completing the ABA judicial nominee questionnaire and not participating in ABA interviews of judicial candidates.[19] Similarly, the executive has threatened the ABA's longstanding role as the accreditor of US law schools.[20] Emboldened by the administration,

[15] See American Bar Association v. Executive Office of the President, U.S. Department of Justice, et al., Complaint for Declaratory & Injunctive Relief (16 June 2025), https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/news/2025/aba-v-exec-ofc-potus-et-al.pdf; American Bar Association files suit to halt government intimidation of lawyers and law firms (ABA Journal, 16 June 2025), https://www.americanbar.org/news/abanews/aba-news-archives/2025/06/aba-files-suit-to-halt-govt-intimidation/.

[16] See Memorandum for All Department Employees from Deputy Attorney General re: Engagement with the American Bar Association (Office of the US Deputy Attorney General, 9 April 2025), https://www.justice.gov/dag/media/1396116/dl?inline; Justice Dept. Bars Its Lawyers From American Bar Association Functions (New York Times, 9 April 2025), https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/09/us/politics/justice-dept-bars-its-lawyers-from-american-bar-association-functions.html.

[17] See Letter to Federal Trade Commission Staff from Federal Trade Commission Chair re: Restrictions on FTC Staff & Engagement with American Bar Association (Office of the Chair, Federal Trade Commission, Feb. 14, 2025), https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/ftc_gov/pdf/aba-letter_ferguson.pdf; FTC Chairman Ferguson Announces New Policy Regarding American Bar Association (Federal Trade Commission, 14 Feb. 2025), https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2025/02/ftc-chairman-ferguson-announces-new-policy-regarding-american-bar-association.

[18] See Supreme Court directs Bar to end ABA House appointments (Florida Bar News, 17 June 2025}, https://www.floridabar.org/the-florida-bar-news/supreme-court-directs-bar-to-end-aba-house-appointments/.

[19] See Letter to ABA President from Attorney General Pam Bondi re: ABA Role in Vetting of Judicial Nominees (Office of the US Attorney General, 29 May 2025), https://www.justice.gov/ag/media/1402156/dl?inline; ABA sends letter to Attorney General defending its judicial evaluation process (ABA Journal, 10 June 2025), https://www.americanbar.org/news/abanews/aba-news-archives/2025/06/aba-sends-letter-re-judicial-evaluation/.

[20] See Executive Order, Reforming Accreditation to Strengthen Higher Education (23 April 2025), https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/04/reforming-accreditation-to-strengthen-higher-education/; Trump executive order says ABA's role as law school accreditor may be revoked (Reuters, 24 April

the Texas Supreme Court has just announced that it will now serve as arbiter of which law schools' graduates can sit for the Texas bar exam and ultimately practice law in the state.[21] Florida and other states are considering similar action.[22] These developments demonstrate that not only individual lawyers and firms, but also the legal profession's primary self-regulatory body, have been subjected to political pressure. In institutional terms, this raises concerns about the erosion of independent professional standard-setting and oversight.

The various measures outlined above demonstrate a troubling pattern of interference and harassment. Such practices are incompatible with international standards safeguarding the independence of the legal profession.

B. Surveillance, Threats, and Harassment of Lawyers

In addition to the high-profile executive orders and presidential acts, other less visible, but more pervasive, actions against lawyers have escalated. Questioning lawyers at the border, attempts to view or copy their electronic devices, the collective withdrawal of access to federal facilities and security clearances, information and document requests sent to lawyers acting in specific protest cases, and online smear campaigns no longer target only the large Washington-based firms. These forms of harassment have also been extended to lawyers working in the field of immigration, defending journalists, defending pro-Palestinian demonstrators, or cooperating with human rights organisations.

B-1. Lawyer Amir Makled representing a pro-Palestinian protester questioned at the border (2025)

In 2025, a US lawyer, Amir Makled, who had represented a client detained at a pro-Palestinian demonstration, was stopped at the US border upon returning from an overseas trip with family members. He was asked detailed questions about his legal work and was told that "it is known that you take on high-profile cases." According to the information reported in the press, officers also requested access to the lawyer's electronic devices; the

2025), https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/trump-executive-order-says-abas-role-law-school-accreditor-may-be-revoked-2025-04-24/.

[21] See, e.g., Texas ends ABA role in law school approvals — and other states may follow suit (Crain's Chicago Business, 8 Jan. 2026), https://www.chicagobusiness.com/law/texas-will-no-longer-rely-aba-accredit-its-law-schools; Texas becomes first state to end American Bar Association oversight of law school (Houston Public Media, 7 Jan. 2026), https://www.houstonpublicmedia.org/articles/court/2026/01/07/540073/texas-supreme-court-ends-american-bar-association-law-school-accreditation/.

[22] See, e.g., Changes in Law School Accreditation Eyed (Florida Trend, 31 Oct. 2025), https://www.floridatrend.com/articles/2025/10/31/changes-law-school-accreditation-eyed/; Uthmeier urges Florida Supreme Court to cut ABA ties (Tallahassee Democrat, 8 Jan. 2026), https://www.tallahassee.com/story/news/state/2026/01/08/uthmeier-targets-aba-law-school-accreditation-role-in-florida/88072058007/.

lawyer objected on the grounds that this would breach professional confidentiality. Such treatment directly undermines the lawyer's duty to preserve client confidentiality and the attorney/client privilege. The lawyer later stated that border officers remarked on his Muslim name and profession, saying they "knew who he was and what he did for a living," indicating a pattern of profiling based on ethnic and professional identity.

B-2. Federal intimidation and demands for information targeting the National Lawyers Guild (2025)

In its statement of 23 October 2025 titled "NLG Denounces Federal Intimidation of Legal Advocacy," the National Lawyers Guild (NLG) made public several federal communications requesting information from lawyers and local NLG chapters that provided legal support to protest actions, Palestine solidarity initiatives, and campus demonstrations. The NLG statement underlined that these communications pressured lawyers and local chapters to share client-related information, thereby recategorising the provision of legal support to peaceful protestors into the "security" domain. NLG stressed that these practices criminalise legal advocacy and are incompatible with Principle 24 of the UN Basic Principles, which protects lawyers' organisations.

B-3. Collective withdrawal of access to federal facilities and security clearances (22 March 2025)

By a Presidential Memorandum dated 22 March 2025, security clearances and access to federal facilities of 14 persons, including lawyers appearing in federal-level cases, were immediately withdrawn. The memorandum did not set out individualised reasoning for the persons concerned, which in practice narrowed the avenues for objection and review. In contrast to established procedures for appealing denials or the withdrawal of security clearances, the individuals concerned received no statement of reasons for the revocation and were therefore unable to file a direct administrative appeal, a departure from basic due-process guarantees. This occurred during the same period when warning letters were sent to the large law firms that had been targeted by the executive, informing them that "continued representation in opposing matters" would lead to restrictions of access.

These practices have had a chilling effect on the legal profession. Lawyers are made to feel that their access can be cut off at any point in their interaction with the state. This has turned into a systematic, structural pressure on the legal profession. This pressure strengthens the perception that "if I take this case, I will face administrative difficulties," and thus weakens access to defence in practice.

C. Politicisation of the Department of Justice and the Judicial System

Known colloquially as "the world's largest law office," the federal DOJ employs more than 115,000 staff – including more than 10,000 lawyers – at DOJ headquarters in Washington, DC and in more than 90 US Attorney's Offices nationwide. Historically, the hallmarks of the DOJ's work have been professionalism, excellence, and, above all, independence. Under reforms instituted following the 1972 Watergate scandal,[23] the DOJ is supposed to be largely shielded from White House influence, through strict communication protocols (limiting White House contact with DOJ lawyers), ethical guidelines for investigations and prosecutions, and norms to ensure that legal judgment is free from political and personal bias.

However, in the space of just one year, developments within DOJ, and to some extent within the federal judiciary, reflect the fact that the executive has not only targeted "external" lawyers in large law firms (and in private practice more generally), but, indeed, has also sought to bring "internal" legal decision-making mechanisms into political alignment with the administration's policies and priorities. Among the trends that have emerged:

I- dismissal or forced resignation of prosecutors working on politically sensitive cases and rejecting the characterisation preferred by the executive;

II- frequent instances where even lawyers working on matters that are not traditionally considered "sensitive" are forced by DOJ leadership to choose between their professional and ethical obligations (such as their duty of candor to tribunals), on one hand, and, on the other hand, their jobs;

III- initiation of disciplinary processes against judges who criticised the executive or who warned that the executive must remain under judicial control; and

IV- weakening of the DOJ's long-standing internal oversight and ethics advisory capacity.

These actions by the administration illustrate a pattern of executive encroachment on legal independence and institutional checks on executive overreach.[24]

[23] See, e.g., Watergate scandal (Brittanica, 5 Dec. 2025), https://www.britannica.com/event/Watergate-Scandal (discussing, inter alia, the events known as the "Saturday Night Massacre", when US President Richard Nixon ordered the Attorney General to fire the Special Prosecutor investigating the President and his role in the Watergate scandal – an order which resulted in the immediate resignations of both the Attorney General and the Deputy Attorney General, who refused to carry out the President's order).

[24] See How the Trump administration erased centuries of Justice Department experience (PBS, 16 Jan. 2026), https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/how-the-trump-administration-erased-centuries-of-justice-department-experience

Increasingly, the DOJ is being politicised and weaponised, and its independence is being corroded as the executive demands unquestioning "loyalty," commanding the Attorney General to do the President's bidding, pursuing investigations and prosecutions of his foes and rivals while shielding friends and allies. Increasingly, the DOJ is operating as the executive's personal counsel.

C-1. Intervention in the Eric Adams case and mass resignations (February 2025)

In February 2025, it became public that the DOJ headquarters had exerted pressure for the dismissal of the corruption investigation concerning New York City Mayor Eric Adams, and that senior prosecutors resigned when they considered this pressure to be legally unfounded. In her resignation letter, prosecutor Danielle Sassoon wrote that the reasons invoked for political intervention "raise serious concerns that render the contemplated dismissal inconsistent with my ability and duty to prosecute federal crimes without fear or favor." Her statement was interpreted by commentators as a warning that prosecutorial discretion was being constrained by political influence. Analyses by commentators including the Cato Institute described the ensuing departures as a "mass resignation." This incident was widely seen as the first clear sign that the space for federal prosecutors to act independently of political will had narrowed.

C-2. Expansion of purges within the DOJ (March 2025)

Career lawyers who had long worked in relatively technical fields such as clemency, bankruptcy, and corporate crime were removed from office on vague grounds such as "incompatibility with the administration's priorities." Since these fields are by nature distant from political contests, this purge shows that the restructuring was not limited to political cases but that the institutional culture as a whole was being politicised.

C-3. Dismissal of DOJ Ethics Director Joseph Tirrell (July 2025)

Joseph Tirrell, the DOJ's ethics director, was removed from office without any stated reason; the dismissal letter referred solely to Article II of the Constitution. Considering that the ethics director provided independent advice on conflicts of interest, recusal and similar matters to the Attorney General and other senior officials, this dismissal indicates that the Department's self-monitoring capacity was also opened up to political intervention.

C-4. Collective dismissal of prosecutors connected to the Jack Smith team (July 2025)

Between 12 and 14 July 2025, several media outlets reported that Attorney General Pam Bondi had dismissed at least 20 prosecutors and support staff who had worked in, or were connected to, federal criminal investigations against President Trump. Such measures undermine the rule of law principle of independence of the prosecutor and contravene Principle 18 of the UN Basic Principles prohibiting identifying a lawyer with their client or client's cause.

C-5. Dismissal of prosecutors handling immigration and 6 January-cases (June–July 2025)

During June and July 2025, it was reported that prosecutors in the immigration field who stated that they "accepted the limits imposed by the court," and prosecutors in cases arising from the events on 6 January 2021 (when a mob breached the US Capitol in an effort to disrupt the certification of the 2020 presidential election results) who described the incident as an "insurrectionary crowd," were dismissed.

C-6 Removal from office of DOJ attorney Erez Reuveni (April 2025)

In April 2025, Erez Reuveni, a longtime Department of Justice immigration attorney and former acting deputy director of the Office of Immigration Litigation, was removed from office after refusing directives he believed were unlawful and unethical. According to his whistleblower disclosures submitted to Congress and federal oversight bodies, senior DOJ and White House officials pressured him to misrepresent facts in court filings, suppress evidence, and participate in deportations that violated federal court orders—actions Reuveni said contravened his oath and legal obligations. He was placed on administrative leave on 5 April 2025, and terminated six days later, shortly after truthfully informing a federal judge that a deportation had been carried out in error. Reuveni has since publicly stated that his firing was retaliation for resisting efforts to defy judicial authority and has appealed his removal under the Whistleblower Protection Act.[25]

[25] See e.g. Fired Justice Department lawyer accuses agency of planning to defy court orders (NPR, 24 June 2025), https://www.npr.org/2025/06/24/g-s1-74316/justice-department-immigration-whistleblower; DOJ Whistleblower Erez Reuveni Exposes High-Level Defiance of Court Orders and Retaliation (Government Accountability Project, 24 June 2025), https://whistleblower.org/press/doj-whistleblower-erez-reuveni-exposes-high-level-defiance-of-court-orders-and-retaliation/; Trump Officials Rejected Shocking Allegations from a DOJ Whistleblower. Former Colleagues Believe Him (Politico, 7 July 2025), https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2025/07/02/erez-reuveni-justice-department-whistleblower-00435486; Why a Devoted Justice Department Lawyer Became a Whistle-blower (The New Yorker, 10 July 2025, https://www.newyorker.com/news/the-lede/why-a-devoted-justice-department-lawyer-became-a-whistle-blower; A D.O.J Whistleblower Speaks Out (New York Times, 23 July 2025),

C-7 Dismissals and forced resignation of prosecutors from the Eastern District of Virginia (March, September and October 2025)

In March 2025, the Eastern District of Virginia's Criminal Chief, Elizabeth Yusi, and her Deputy, Kristin Bird, were dismissed after refusing to bring charges against New York Attorney General Letitia James. Their removal has been interpreted as retaliation for declining to pursue prosecutions they perceived as politically motivated, reinforcing the perception that prosecutorial discretion was being subordinated to political expectations.
In September 2025, Erik Siebert, US Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, likewise reportedly resisted pressure to indict political rivals of the President, stating that "the facts and evidence did not support such charges." He was subsequently forced to resign.
In October 2025, Michael Ben'Ary, the top national security prosecutor in the Eastern District of Virginia, was dismissed following a post on X (formerly Twitter) by a pro-Trump activist falsely linking him to resistance to the indictment of James Comey. Ben'Ary publicly denounced his dismissal as "without cause" and "based on a single social media post containing false information."

C-8 Administrative leave for prosecutors (October 2025)

Assistant US Attorneys Carlos Valdivia and Samuel White were placed on administrative leave in October 2025, hours after they filed a sentencing memorandum for 6 January defendant, Taylor Taranto, described the events as involving "thousands of people comprising a mob of rioters." That phrase was deleted from the final memorandum by a replacement prosecutor. The removal of the two prosecutors indicates that even descriptive language in court filings can become grounds for discipline or dismissal where it conflicts with the executive's preferred political narrative.

C-9 Removal of federal prosecutor Maurene Comey (July 2025)

Federal prosecutor Maurene Comey, daughter of former FBI Director James Comey and a prosecutor in high-profile cases such as those involving Jeffrey Epstein and Sean "Diddy" Combs, was dismissed from the DOJ in July 2025 without reasons, but widely interpreted to be due to her association with her father, who oversaw an investigation into President Trump's 2016 election campaign. In a note to her colleagues, she wrote that "fear is a

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https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/23/podcasts/the-daily/a-doj-whistleblower-speaks-out.html; Fired Justice Department lawyer says he refused to lie in the Abrego Garcia case
(CBS News, 19 October 2025), https://www.cbsnews.com/news/erez-reuveni-justice-department-whistleblower-kilmar-abrego-garcia-60-minutes/

bully's tool;" this statement shows that the wave of removals within the DOJ was experienced by staff as a broader campaign of intimidation, rather than as a series of isolated personnel decisions.

C-10. Disciplinary and impeachment threats against judges (the James Boasberg example) (July 2025)

In July 2025, the DOJ requested that disciplinary proceedings be initiated against Chief Judge James Boasberg of the US District Court for the District of Columbia, on the grounds that he had stated that the executive's disregard for court decisions could trigger a "constitutional crisis." Subjecting a judge to disciplinary proceedings after he called on the executive to abide by the rule of law has a direct chilling effect on judicial independence.

When considered together, the developments outlined in this subsection point to a pattern in which political alignment – not legal judgment – has gained increasing weight in internal decision-making within the DOJ and, at times, in interactions with the federal judiciary. Although political influence on prosecutorial and judicial appointments has existed under numerous administrations, the examples documented here suggest an intensification of efforts to reshape internal legal functions in ways that risk narrowing the space for independent legal reasoning and in violation of the UN Guidelines on the Role of Prosecutors, as well as the US Department of Justice Principles of Federal Prosecution. Regardless of the administration in power, such trends can erode confidence in the predictability and impartiality of public decision making and complicate the work of lawyers who must rely on stable, principled, and constitutionally grounded institutional counterparts.

D. Chilling Effect on Legal Representation and Civil Society

When executive targeting and surveillance of law firms and lawyers interact with increasing politicisation within the DOJ, a climate emerges that discourages lawyers from engaging in areas of practice involving rights-based, dissenting, or vulnerable groups. Commentators have noted that federal scrutiny directed at certain law firms and legal organisations appeared to reduce their willingness to take on cases relating to migration, women's rights, LGBTI+ rights, Palestinian rights, press freedom, and election-related matters, prompting a shift toward commercially "safer" or politically neutral compliance fields.

In this context, the chilling effect does not arise from a single overt sanction but from a cumulative climate in which lawyers anticipate risks and alter their conduct in advance. This phenomenon operates through several interconnected channels:

I- Self-selection and avoidance of contentious representations

Lawyers and firms will likely increasingly decline clients or case types that could attract political attention, reputational controversy, or regulatory scrutiny. Even where no formal barriers exist, the perception that certain cases may provoke executive or administrative pushback leads to a narrowing of legal representation in areas requiring robust rights advocacy.

II- Anticipatory self-censorship in legal argumentation

Practitioners may moderate the positions they advance in briefs, hearings, or public statements to avoid being portrayed as politically adversarial. This includes limiting constitutional arguments, avoiding frameworks associated with "oppositional" movements, or refraining from filing amicus briefs that would otherwise be routine for rights-aligned practice areas.

III- Institutional risk management within large firms and legal organisations

Large firms may increasingly incorporate political-risk assessments into intake processes. Partners may steer away from matters where federal funding, regulatory approvals, or access to federal facilities could be jeopardised.

IV- Exposure concerns due to surveillance and information requests

As cases of investigative pressure on collective defence organisations (such as the NLG) became public, there has been growing concern that involvement in certain fields could lead to individual monitoring, document requests, or digital scrutiny. Even unfounded inquiries can create a deterrent effect on participation in legal advocacy.

V- Fear of financial retaliation and cascading client loss

Firms that rely on federal contracts or that represent clients with substantial regulatory exposure may fear that contentious rights cases could trigger reputational risk among existing commercial clients. This encourages practice-shifting away from areas where political sensitivity is perceived to be high.

VI- Concerns regarding professional disciplinary vulnerability

Ambiguity about whether certain forms of rights advocacy could be construed as inconsistent with executive-branch expectations—combined with warnings from professional bodies about compliance obligations—creates anxiety among lawyers about potential disciplinary exposure. Even speculative disciplinary risk can significantly discourage engagement in contested fields.

The targeting of lawyers and large law firms, described above, has had particularly severe consequences in certain legal sectors and for communities that are structurally more vulnerable. Notably, however, solo practitioners, and smaller and boutique law firms, have

stepped up to significantly blunt the impact of large firms' withdrawal from politically-sensitive areas of pro bono practice and paying work – a testament to the vibrancy of the legal profession in the US.[26]

D-1 Immigration judiciary and defence

Despite the administration's stated focus on immigration enforcement as an executive priority, the executive has dismissed or terminated more than 100 of the nation's approximately 700 immigration judges, and has done so without providing any reasons.[27] A significant majority of the targeted judges are judges whose work history before taking the bench was in immigration defence or legal aid (rather than enforcement) and whose rulings tended to be less consistent with the administration's pro-enforcement agenda, as compared to their colleagues who remain on the immigration bench.[28]

These developments indicate that both judges and lawyers operating in the immigration field have become exposed to heightened administrative pressure, with direct repercussions for the fairness and independence of proceedings affecting non-citizens and migrants.

[26] See, e.g., Big Law Firms Bowed to Trump. A Corps of 'Little Guys' Jumped in to Fight Him. (New York Times, 21 July 2025), https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/21/us/politics/trump-big-law-firms-fight.html; 'Small and mighty in numbers,' solo and small firm lawyers help challenge Trump administration agenda (ABA Journal, 23 July 2025), https://www.abajournal.com/news/article/small-and-mighty-in-numbers-solo-and-small-firm-lawyers-help-challenge-administration-agenda.

[27] See, e.g., The Trump administration fired nearly 100 immigration judges in 2025. What's next? (National Public Radio ("NPR"), 10 Jan. 2025), https://www.npr.org/2026/01/10/nx-s1-5672386/the-trump-administration-fired-nearly-100-immigration-judges-in-2025-whats-next; Immigration courts thrown into chaos as Trump administration purges dozens of judges (Politico, 6 Dec. 2025), https://www.politico.com/news/2025/12/06/trump-immigration-court-judge-purges-00679376; The Trump Administration Won't Stop Firing Immigration Judges (Mother Jones, 2 Dec. 2025), https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2025/12/deportation-judge-trump-immigration-court-purge-federal-plaza-new-york-city/; Inside Donald Trump's Attack on Immigration Courts (The New Yorker, 23 Oct. 2025), https://www.newyorker.com/inside-donald-trumps-attack-on-immigration-court; Eight New York Immigration Judges Fired in Sudden EOIR Purge: A Dangerous New Phase in U.S. Immigration Adjudication (MyAttorney USA, 6 Jan. 2026), https://myattorneyusa.com/immigration-news/eight-new-york-immigration-judges-fired-in-sudden-eoir-purge-a-dangerous-new-phase-in-u-s-immigration-adjudication/; Ousted immigration judge describes deepening court backlog (Public Broadcasting Service ("PBS"), 12 Nov. 2025), https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/ousted-immigration-judge-describes-deepening-court-backlog.

[28] See, e.g., The DOJ has been firing judges with immigrant defense backgrounds (National Public Radio ("NPR"), 6 Nov. 2025), https://www.npr.org/2025/11/06/g-s1-96437/trump-immigration-judges-fired; 'Climate of fear': Immigration judges say functioning of their court system is in jeopardy due to Trump's firings (Government Executive, 14 Nov. 2025), https://www.govexec.com/management/2025/11/climate-fear-immigration-judges-say-functioning-their-court-system-jeopardy-due-trumps-firings/409544/.

D-2 Public defence and legal aid for the poor

Strikes and work stoppages in Massachusetts and New York throughout the summer of 2025 pushed an already fragile public defence system into crisis. Hundreds of criminal cases were postponed or dismissed. As federal and local authorities failed to allocate sufficient resources to address the situation, access to defence for indigent defendants was significantly weakened. The combination of structural underfunding and political neglect amounts, in practical terms, to a systemic denial of effective legal assistance for those least able to afford private counsel in violation of the Basic Principles (Principle 1.3).

This has been intensified by the 2025 termination of federal grants for "violence reduction, policing and prosecution, victims' services, juvenile justice and child protection, substance use and mental health treatment, corrections, justice system enhancements, research and evaluation, and other state- and local-level public safety functions." Federal defenders also face evictions and bankruptcy as a result of a prolonged stalemate in resolving the dispute over federal funding. The absence or erosion of federal funding has resulted in many federal defenders being unable to continue to provide representation, thus undermining defendants' right to effective representation.

D-3 Cases on Palestine solidarity, LGBTI+ rights and migrant rights

Since specific issues have been identified in executive orders as "activities undermining the interests of the United States," there is broad concern within the non-profit sector that it will be increasingly difficult to secure legal representation in matters concerning sensitive issues such as Palestine solidarity, LGBTI+ rights and migrant rights. Large firms, anticipating that taking on such files could trigger administrative sanctions or political scrutiny, have begun to withdraw from these fields. This not only exacerbates existing inequalities in access to legal assistance but also deepens the chilling effect described above, by signalling that entire categories of rights-based advocacy may carry disproportionate professional and institutional risk.

The US was included on the CIVICUS Civil Society Watchlist (July 2025); and the US's score in the World Justice Project's 2025 Rule of Law Index (28 Oct. 2025)[29] dropped nearly 3% from the year before, marked by "[a]n expansion of authoritarian trends", due to "deep declines in factors measuring Constraints on Government Powers, Open Government and

[29] See World Justice Project (WJP) Rule of Law Index (released 28 Oct. 2025), https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/; Fact Sheet: The United States Ranks 27 out of 143 in the WJP Rule of Law Index (World Justice Project (WJP), 28 Oct. 2025), https://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/documents/United%20States_2.pdf.

Fundamental Rights", with the judiciary losing ground to executive overreach, as well as a serious weakening of "the integrity of checks and balances" and "shrinking civic space". These developments alongside concerns raised by human-rights monitoring organisations—show that pressures on expressive and associational freedoms reverberate into the legal profession. As access to independent and rights-based legal assistance narrows, international standards guaranteeing that lawyers can represent clients "without fear and without being identified with them" risk losing practical effect.

5- CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Summary of Systemic Threats to Legal Independence

The current situation of lawyers and the justice system in the US reveals a sustained and coordinated campaign aimed at undermining the independence of the legal profession, the judiciary, and related institutions. The measures deployed – ranging from direct executive interference in the work of law firms and individual lawyers, to politicised judicial appointments, targeted purges within the DOJ, and efforts to undermine and weaken bar associations – illustrate a troubling pattern of political intimidation and institutional destabilisation unprecedented in the modern history of the US.

Direct administrative and political pressure on lawyers and law firms has included the revocation of security clearances, bans from federal premises (including courthouses), cancellation of public contracts, and politicised disciplinary proceedings. Such measures violate key international standards, including the UN Basic Principles, which prohibit the identification of lawyers with their clients and their clients' causes and protect them from interference in their professional duties.

Concerns have also emerged about pressures on judicial and prosecutorial independence. These include questions around the long-term impact of certain appointment practices, public criticism and threats directed at sitting judges, changes affecting prosecutors working on high-profile cases, and departures from customary selection procedures. Taken together, these developments have diminished the independence of the justice system, which will erode public trust in the administration of justice.

In parallel, deliberate efforts have been made to undermine professional institutions, such as the American Bar Association and local bar associations, excluding them from judicial candidate evaluations, banning participation of government lawyers, and threatening to

revoke their authority to accredit law schools. These actions undermine the self-regulatory capacity and protective role of the profession.

The immigration justice system has also been targeted, with mass dismissals of immigration judges, arrests of judges for alleged obstruction of enforcement, courthouse raids, and chronic underfunding of immigration defence. Such measures deprive vulnerable individuals of representation, paralyse the system, and compromise the right to a fair hearing.

B. Broader Implications for Rule of Law and International Norms

The measures targeting the legal profession have far-reaching consequences. They affect the balance of authority among the branches of government by increasing executive influence and limiting opportunities for independent and impartial judicial oversight, which weakens established checks and safeguards. Reduced access to justice—shaped in part by a climate that discourages legal professionals from taking on sensitive matters—compromises core protections such as the right to legal representation, due process, and equal treatment before the law, as reflected in Article 14 of the ICCPR. In addition, strains on legal culture, including the normalisation of pressure and threats, erodes ethical standards and diminishes public confidence in the legal system.

Internationally, these developments have weakened US credibility as a defender of the rule of law, and set a dangerous precedent for other States, and risk undermining the universality of human rights protections. Doubts about the independence of US lawyers and judges could hinder cross-border judicial cooperation, including extradition, mutual legal assistance, and enforcement of judgments.

As this report demonstrates, confronting this crisis requires coordinated action: domestic legal remedies to overturn unlawful measures, sustained advocacy to secure adequate funding for defence functions, and mobilisation of international human rights mechanisms to hold the authorities accountable. Only through such combined efforts can the US legal profession serve as a cornerstone of democracy and the rule of law—both nationally and as part of the global system of human rights protection.

C. Recommendations

The current trends in the US present a complex set of risks to the independence of the bar and the legal profession. Without systemic reforms, these will evolve into a persistent crisis of trust in the justice and legal sectors. The situation requires both an international response and internal institutional restructuring to strengthen guarantees for lawyers.

To prevent further deterioration and restore respect for the rule of law, urgent and coordinated action is needed at all levels.

To US national authorities

Legislative branch (US Congress and state legislatures):

- Hold urgent legislative hearings on pressure against the legal profession and politicisation of the DOJ
- Use oversight and budgetary powers to protect independent institutions, including Inspectors General and immigration courts
- Enact legislation enhancing protection of judges and lawyers from intimidation and persecution, codifying barriers between political leadership and law enforcement
- Pass a law prohibiting executive orders targeting law firms for professional activities
- Establish a bipartisan congressional commission for annual reports on bar independence, with public hearings
- Require disciplinary bodies to issue public, reasoned decisions and provide independent appeals. Prohibit politically or ideologically motivated disciplinary actions, including those based on client choice or case positions
- Sign and ratify the Luxembourg Convention once it enters into force and is open to non-Council of Europe states

Executive branch:

- Immediately cease the practice of using executive orders and memoranda to target lawyers and law firms
- Ensure that all lawyers can practice without fear of intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference
- Guarantee that lawyers shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognised professional duties, standards, and ethics
- Remove the executive orders and memoranda that have restricted security clearances and interfered with the legal practice of certain law firms
- End the practice of imposing sanctions on the ICC and remove all the current sanctions imposed on ICC personnel, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and legal NGOs working on the collection of evidence in the scope of the ongoing investigations at the ICC in connection with war crimes, crimes against humanity, or other Rome Statute crimes in respect of the Situations in the State of Palestine and Afghanistan

- Restore the independence of the DOJ by ending politically motivated dismissals and appointments
- Publicly reaffirm the commitment to judicial independence and fully comply with all court rulings
- Resume traditional cooperation with the ABA in the selection and evaluation of judicial candidates
- Increase public legal defence budgets, introduce minimum pay standards with federal grants for legal aid and pro bono programmes
- Strengthen security measures for lawyers and judges through a federal protection law, including monitoring of online threats
- Sign and ratify the Luxembourg Convention once it enters into force and is open to non-Council of Europe states

Judicial branch:

- Continue to publicly condemn attempts to pressure judges
- Develop and implement federal and local protocols safeguarding court processes and premises from improper law enforcement interference
- In all states, whether judges are appointed or elected, adopt codes of ethics for judges to prevent political pressure

<u>To international organisations and other stakeholders</u>

United Nations:

- The Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers should monitor the situation and prepare a public report for the UN Human Rights Council
- UN bodies should urge the US authorities to resume cooperation with the UN human rights mechanisms, including the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review process

International and regional bar associations:

- Issue public statements condemning pressure on the legal profession in the US and expressing solidarity with American colleagues
- Organise international observation missions to monitor trials and meet with US legal community representatives
- Use global platforms to raise awareness of the situation
- Prepare comparative reports on best practices for bar independence in federal systems

- Provide legal and media support to lawyers under pressure, including international dissemination of information on violations

Civil society organisations

- Form coalitions to legally challenge executive orders targeting law firms as unconstitutional
- Launch public awareness campaigns to educate people on the importance of lawyer and judicial independence in safeguarding rights
- Organise legal defence funds for lawyers, judges, and officials subject to wrongful dismissal or pressure, including strike support funds
- Develop and implement safety programmes for lawyers handling high-profile cases
- Conduct independent audits of disciplinary procedures and promote the inadmissibility of politically motivated cases
- Monitor and document pressure on lawyers, submitting data to international bodies

Law schools and academia:

- Actively document, analyse, and publish research on current threats to the rule of law
- Include courses on ethical dilemmas and the role of lawyers in defending democratic institutions under political pressure in curricula
- Conduct interdisciplinary international research on the impact of bar independence on justice quality, with open access to findings

Media:

- Continue and deepen investigative reporting on pressure against lawyers and judges, ensuring public accountability and transparency
- Actively expose political interference in the work of lawyers and other legal professionals.

An attack on the independence of the legal profession is an attack on the core of democracy. Silence and inaction in this situation are equivalent to complicity. As the global legal community, we must show solidarity and use every tool available to defend our American colleagues and the fundamental principles we have sworn to uphold. The fate of the rule of law in the US –and worldwide – depends on our collective action today.

List of Signatories / in an alphabetical order:

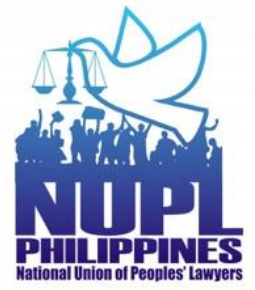
1. Asociación Americana de Juristas
2. Asociación de Derecho Penitenciario Rebeca Santamalia (ASDEPRES)
3. Asociación Libre de la Abogacía (ALA)
4. Associação Portuguesa de Juristas Democratas (APJD – Portugal)
5. Association Internationale des Jeunes Avocats / International Association of Young Lawyers (AIJA)
6. Avocats Européens Démocrates / European Democratic Lawyers (AED)
7. Avocats Sans Frontières France / Lawyers Without Borders France
8. Bar Human Rights Committee of England & Wales (BHRC)
9. Behatokia - Basque Country Human Rights Observatory
10. Centre for Research and Elaboration for Democracy (CRED)
11. Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE)
12. Cyprus Democratic Lawyers Association (CDLA)
13. Defense Commission of the Barcelona Bar Association
14. Défense Sans Frontière – Avocats Solidaires (DSF-AS)
15. Democratic Lawyers Association (Italy)
16. Democratic Lawyers Association of Bangladesh (DLAB)
17. Democratic Lawyers Switzerland (DJS-JDS)
18. Deutscher Anwaltverein / German Bar Association
19. European Association of Lawyers for Democracy and World Human Rights (ELDH)
20. European Criminal Bar Association (ECBA)
21. Federation of European Bars (FBE)
22. Foundation Day of the Endangered Lawyer
23. Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers, United Kingdom
24. Human Rights Institute of the Brussels Bar
25. Human Rights Solidarity (HRS), United Kingdom
26. Indian Association of Lawyers (IAL)
27. Institut des Droits de l'Homme des Avocats Européens (IDHAE)

28. International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL)
29. International Association of People's Lawyers (IAPL)
30. International Association of Russian Advocates
31. International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)
32. International Observatory for Lawyers at Risk (OIAD)
33. International Tribunal of Conscience of Peoples in Movement / Internacional de Conciencia de los Pueblos en Movimiento (Mexico City)
34. Law Society of England and Wales
35. Lawyers for the Rule of Law, United States
36. Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada
37. Legal Centre Lesvos, Greece
38. MEDEL (Magistrats Européens pour la Démocratie et les Libertés)
39. National Association of Democratic Lawyers (NADEL), South Africa
40. National Union of People's Lawyers / Philippines (NUPL)
41. New York City Bar Association
42. Ordine degli Avvocati di Torino
43. Ordine degli Avvocati di Venezia / Venice Bar Association
44. Ordre des Avocats de Genève (ODAGE)
45. Progressive Lawyers Association (ÇHD), Turkey
46. Rechtsanwaltskammer Berlin / Berlin Bar Association, Germany
47. Republikanischer Anwältinnen- und Anwälteverein (RAV e.V.)
48. Socialist Lawyers' Association of Ireland (SLAI)
49. Syndicat des Avocat.es de France (SAF)
50. Syndicat des Avocats pour la Démocratie (SAD)
51. The Arrested Lawyers Initiative
52. Unione delle Camere Penali Italiane (UCPI)
53. Vereinigung Demokratischer Jurist:innen e.V. (VDJ)

Asociación de Derecho Penitenciario Rebeca Santamalia (ASDEPRES)

Democratic Lawyers Association of Bangladesh (DLAB)

International Tribunal of Conscience of Peoples in Movement / Internacional de Conciencia de los Pueblos en Movimiento (Mexico City)




RAK
Berlin
Rechtsanwaltskammer
Berlin


Republikanischer
Anwältinnen- und
Anwälteverein e.V.
RAV


SOCIALIST LAWYERS
ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND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AVOCATS DE FRANCE


SAD
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