
Endangered Lawyers Data Coalition

The mission of the Endangered Lawyers Data Coalition (ELDC) is to map attacks against lawyers and the legal profession worldwide by publishing data to raise awareness and support informed responses to the issue.

Statement of need

The rule of law is under increasing attack in many parts of the world. Independent lawyers are guardians of the rule of law. They are central actors in ensuring, among others, access to justice, the right to a fair trial, equality before the law and respect for human rights. For precisely this reason, in many nations globally, lawyers suffer intimidation, harassment and attacks against their ability to practice.

Persecuted by governments, non-state actors, militias and private individuals, lawyers worldwide endure suspension and disbarment, threats to their lives and the lives of their families, violence, arbitrary detention, wrongful prosecution and sentencing, disappearances and even death in retaliation for their work. Lawyers are targeted because of their willingness to represent marginalised or unpopular clients and causes that would otherwise remain voiceless.

Independent lawyers are guardians of the rule of law and are increasingly under attack in many parts of the world.

When minorities, vulnerable and targeted groups, as well as civil society members and human rights defenders lack access to a lawyer, their rights are unprotected. When lawyers fear reprisal for their work, they are deterred from taking on sensitive cases. Entire communities may be excluded from justice processes and already vulnerable groups and individuals may be denied equal protection under the law.

There is no central tracking of attacks against lawyers worldwide. This knowledge gap makes it challenging to combat these concerns and protect lawyers.

Understanding the scope and scale of an issue is a prerequisite to combating it. Society cannot change what it is not aware of.

Improved information and documentation will shed light on attacks against lawyers, enabling more effective responses. Consequently, enhanced data in this area will facilitate greater support, attention, funding, and aid for lawyers who risk their lives to serve their clients, protect vulnerable voices and communities, and enhance the rule of law.

The Project

Seeing the challenges from their respective organisations, six entities partnered to build a secure central database to collect data on attacks against lawyers from around the world to highlight concerns publicly as a precursor to action.

In 2024, these organisations established the ELDC, a tax-exempt foundation in the Netherlands, to administer operations. The ELDC will build global partnerships with organisations engaged in research on behalf of persecuted lawyers, ensuring they contribute data to the central database. For safety reasons, the database will remain private and secure. Statistics will be made publicly available.

We seek to close this knowledge gap by collecting data on attacks against lawyers worldwide and publishing related statistics to better protect lawyers.

Our scope includes those covered by the Havana Convention, including lawyers, judges, paralegals and 'barefoot lawyers' (ie, those who are self-taught and without law degrees). We are mapping attacks on legal professionals worldwide by:

- aggregating available data to assess its reliability and identify regions with limited information;
- conducting research and outreach to fill geographic gaps and achieve a fully monitored globe; and
- generating metrics for comparisons by country to highlight areas in particular need of attention and relief.

We welcome membership and support.

Please contact us for further information:

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**The American Association for the
International Commission of Jurists**

**The International Bar Association
Human Rights Institute**

**The American Bar Association
Center for Human Rights**

**The International Bar Association
Rule of Law Forum**

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