



Bob Woodward (left) in conversation with IBA executive director Mark Ellis

Trump presents ‘intolerable risk’ to US democracy

By Anne Gallagher

In a far-ranging conversation with IBA executive director Mark Ellis, two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Bob Woodward accused US President Donald Trump of overseeing an unprecedented abuse of power and challenged the news media to “raise their game” reporting the news fairly and accurately.

In an hour and a half session in which Woodward took audience questions, he discussed presidential power and accountability, offered lessons from Watergate and spoke about the news media’s “loss of integrity”.

“What Donald Trump has done is shredded the rule of law,” Woodward said. “Under the constitution of the United States, the president has real power and Trump has seized it. He is an authoritarian leader within a democracy.”

Woodward interviewed Trump in 2016 and asked him his definition of power. “Trump told me that real power is fear,” Woodward explained. “He is using that fear now to extend the power of the presidency to an extent we have never seen before. The presidency has become a money-making opportunity for himself and his family. The founding fathers of our constitution would shudder to see what has happened and the absolute subversion of the Republican party by Trump.”

As an example, Woodward recounted that during 20 interviews with Trump in 2020, he learned that the president was warned by Robert O’Brien, his national security advisor, that the coronavirus would be the biggest threat to his presidency, was expected to kill at least 650,000 people and was going to be like the Spanish flu of 1918.

“Trump’s response was to say that it was going to go away,” Woodward said. “When you look at what Trump did, if he would have shared the warning with the public... It was a moral felony on his part.”

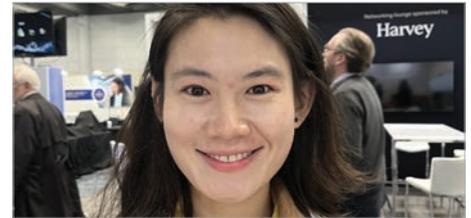
Ellis asked Woodward to compare and contrast President Richard Nixon’s crimes during Watergate to issues in the Trump presidencies.

Woodward said there was a significant difference in these situations. “What Nixon did was criminal and he resigned when his own party turned against him,” he said, adding that when Nixon went to Republican leaders to ask whether he could survive impeachment proceedings with the required two-thirds, or 67 votes, in the Senate, Republican Senator Barry Goldwater told him: “Mr. President, you do not have five votes and one of them is not

Continued on page 5

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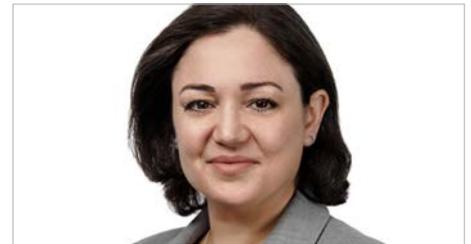
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MEET THE DELEGATES

Find out the most pressing legal issues in countries around the world

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GUIDE TO TORONTO

Torontonians share their favourite places to visit in this vibrant city

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JUSTICE IN WARTIME

Learn how the IBA has been supporting Ukraine in its war with Russia

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Delegate Views

What are some of your country's most pressing legal issues?

Benyam Tafesse Dubero
Partner
TBeST Law
Ethiopia



Ethiopia recently implemented significant reforms to attract foreign investment. Many of the problems in Africa stem from a poor economy, and business investment is key to contributing to our success. Our law firm is here to help companies invest and navigate the legal issues.

Andrada Tiru
Managing Associate
Simmons & Simmons
Netherlands



For the Netherlands, a key issue is the rise of ESG litigation claims. For example, activists filed a prominent case against a Dutch bank related to their investments in oil and gas projects. Activists feel increasingly empowered to file against large corporations, which creates an increase in litigation.

Sushant Shetty
Partner
Fox Mandal & Associates
India



In India, there is a huge judicial backlog. There are more than 47 million cases pending. Justice delayed is justice denied. There are also many vacant judicial positions. The solution is to create more court infrastructure, hire more judges and have more fast-track courts. We need to make justice more accessible to everyone.

Juan Pablo Perrino
Partner
Beccar Varela
Argentina



Last year, Argentina passed the Incentive Regime for Large Investments, with a goal of attracting foreign capital into sectors like mining, energy and technology. However, the regime is set to expire in July 2026. We want to help as many foreign companies as possible to take advantage of this important opportunity.

Samuel Carbajal Emiliano
Senior Associate
SLLM
Mexico



In June, Mexico became the first country in the world to hold nationwide elections for judicial positions. While this was framed as a democratic milestone, the reform raises serious concerns about the erosion of institutional checks on the executive branch. It is urgent for Mexico to have independent, impartial judges.

Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC
Barrister
Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC
Strategy
Ireland



A critical issue in Ireland is accountability; women and children who were in Magdalen laundries and survivors of historic child sexual abuse. Ireland is grappling with its past. Internationally, the most pressing issues I'm currently working on include detention of journalists for their journalism.

Lucinda Orr
Partner
Enyo Law
United Kingdom



I would say fair access to justice – the dichotomy between the criminal and the commercial bar is one of the UK's most pressing issues. The top-end legal services in the UK are genuinely world-class. That reputation is built on our rule of law and excellent judges, but there is chronic underfunding in the criminal justice system.

Xueqi Liu
Partner
Deheng (Xiamen) offices
China



Arbitration law and maritime law are very important in China today. We just updated our arbitration rules and that means more international disputes will be settled in China rather than London or Singapore. In maritime law, it will be more complicated because the new law updates 301 policies.

Alvaro Aguilar
Partner
Aguilar Cantillo Love SRL
Costa Rica



In Costa Rica, our labour law is from 1943; it's old and antiquated. The legal structure of the law is based on outdated concepts that do not align with our current economic realities. It's important to update our labour laws because the law is changing very fast and we are far behind.

Wayne Carroll
Chief Traveller/Lecturer
Living Law
Germany



The top issue in Germany is the Ukraine war. It's hanging over all business activity because it affects where you sell your products, where you can offer services and whether you can get paid from a certain country. Germans are hoping for an outcome that preserves Ukraine's sovereignty, realising it might require some concessions.

Wilfrido Fernandez
Managing Partner
Zacarias & Fernandez
Abogados
Paraguay



We'd like the judiciary in Paraguay to be more independent to increase public trust in our legal system. But we are a very stable regime, attractive for foreign investment because of our favourable tax laws that provide 10% corporate tax, 10% personal income tax and 10% value added tax.

Karen Kaiser
General Counsel
The Associated Press
United States



The US is at a fragile moment. There has always been a tension between press and the government but it has escalated. An example includes the retaliation when the AP wouldn't call the Gulf of Mexico the Gulf of America. The solution is to continue to stand up for principles when they are attacked.

Panel advocates for consistent AI framework to protect human rights

By Anne Gallagher

From rogue chatbots to degraded algorithms, AI systems can pose serious risks to human rights, such as discrimination, gender inequality, threats to democratic processes and misuse for repressive purposes, potentially violating international human rights law.

In a discussion titled *The proliferation of AI in business: friend or foe? Navigating human rights compliance in the age of artificial intelligence*, panellists spoke about the pressing need for harmonisation of both global standards and regulation throughout the public and private sectors.

Programme facilitator Martijn Scheltema of Pels Rijcken in The Hague, Netherlands, commented: "AI can have human rights impact at a very large, even global, scale, yet human rights impact assessments of AI including stakeholder engagement are not undertaken at this scale," adding: "In order to create a level playing field and legal certainty it would be advisable if new AI regulation around the world would be consistent with the AI and human rights framework convention of the Council of Europe."

Panellist Lyra Jakuleviciene, a law professor at Mykolas Romeris University, provided an overview of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPR). While noting "enormous gaps" and "different approaches" for state and company compliance vis-à-vis human rights, she said that "what's very clear is that out of thousands of standards, there is a shift to mandatory legislation at the international level and also at the regional level". She cited the European Union AI act and similar legislation with African Unions and in



The panel (l-r) Martijn Scheltema, Lyra Jakuleviciene, Meg Roggensack, Daisuke Takahashi, Marloes Pompei, Bernhard Maier

countries including Brazil and Latin America and Korea, among other countries that deal with human rights assessments related to AI.

In 2025, Japan enacted its AI Act, said panellist Daisuke Takahashi, a lawyer with Japan's Shinwa Law. He noted that Japan's approach differs from the EU as they tried to prioritise international principles and human rights. "Although there is no penalty for noncompliance for businesses, they face the reputational risk of public disclosure," he said.

Other challenges include what panellist Marloes Pompei, former vice president European AI Forum, described as a "huge misunderstanding that regulation will hinder innovation". She commented: "Regulation isn't the problem; scaling up is. Every organisation is currently reinventing the wheel in terms of compliance. An international accreditation centre could help with this."

While regulatory efforts are playing out, panellist Bernhard Maier, a partner with Browne Jacobson in London, suggested strategic litigation as a means of addressing time-sensitive issues. He cited the case of a rogue chatbot in Italy that was shut down by prosecutors after providing ill-advised information. "In some situations, it's important to act quickly," he said. "Litigation can restore the balance while regulatory efforts are happening."

These issues underscore the importance of conducting due diligence of AI systems, a practice panellist Meg Roggensack, executive officer at the Business and Human Rights Lawyers Association, said that businesses do not consistently undertake. On a positive note, she sees that private industry has been banding together to address what she said has become "nuanced and multi-layered in the current political environment".

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Funding, fairness and the future of class actions

Global panel tracks new trends, funding models and procedural shifts

Leading lawyers from five jurisdictions traced how class actions are maturing and multiplying, while courts and funders adapt to keep pace.

Session chair Amel Fenghour, secretary of the IBA class actions committee and a director at funder Innsworth Advisors in London, said collective litigation “is now embedded in our legal systems but continues to evolve with economic and cultural change”.

Rustam Juma, general counsel at Volkswagen Group Canada, reported a sharp rise in claims. “We’ve seen roughly four times more class actions in 2025 than last year,” he said, citing US-style copycat suits and uniquely Canadian filings around vehicle theft, electric-vehicle performance and pricing transparency.

Sonia Bjorkquist, of Osler Hoskin & Harcourt, noted that Canada’s class action market, among the world’s most mature, is splitting along provincial lines. Ontario’s stricter certification test has pushed plaintiffs toward British Columbia “where costs are lower and certification is easier – but delays are growing”.

From London, Kathleen Donnelly KC, of Henderson Chambers, highlighted both opportunity and strain in the UK system. She cited the example of the Post Office scandal, regarded as the most widespread miscarriage of justice in UK history.

The wrongful conviction of more than 900 sub postmasters for theft, fraud and false accounting based on faulty data from the Post Office’s Horizon accounting system was only brought to light by a civil claim backed by litigation funding.

Donnell said the case “showed class actions delivering genuine access to justice”, while the diesel-emissions cases demonstrate courts’ procedural innovation through lead-defendant structures. Yet financing remains contentious: “If you can’t fund collective claims, you can’t enforce rights.”

Porfirio Moreira, a partner at Sousa Ferro & Associados in Lisbon, said Europe’s “collective redress” movement grew from competition follow-on cases but is spreading to privacy and greenwashing. “Justice has always depended on financial capacity,” he argued. “The real issue isn’t whether class actions are commercialised, but whether they remain fair and effective for citizens.”

Australian funder John Walker, founder of the Association of Litigation Funders of Australia, recalled that his country’s regime only began to work once funding was formalised. “Funding created the equality of arms necessary for justice,” he said.

Closing the session, Fenghour observed that while approaches vary, “all jurisdictions are grappling with the same tension between access to justice and control of cost and complexity”.

“Class actions are not just legal tools,” she said, “they are instruments of accountability in modern societies.”

Private equity is coming: panel highlights its growing impact

“Private equity is coming” was a key message from the alternative and new law business structures committee panel on law firm mergers.

Opening the discussion, Anna Balinsky of KPMG Law in Toronto predicted that private investment will reshape the legal profession within the next three to four years.

She argued that while the largest global firms are unlikely to move first, mid-market firms in “friendly” jurisdictions such as the UK will lead the way, pioneering international structures backed by outside capital.

Balinsky emphasised that such models can also comply with professional conduct rules in less flexible markets by focusing on cost-sharing rather than revenue-sharing, particularly in markets such as Canada where profit-sharing with non-lawyers is prohibited. “There’s no reason you can’t set up an international law firm structure with PE backing,” she said.

But financial innovation alone won’t guarantee success. Tal Eyal-Boger of FISCHER, which is based in Tel Aviv, warned that mergers often fail when cultural dynamics are ignored. “Culture eats strategy for breakfast,” she said, urging firms to consider everything from governance to office design and interpersonal

chemistry before combining operations. “You can have the perfect checklist, but without emotional intelligence, you’re still at risk.”

From Asia, Panupan Udomsuvannakul, of Mori Hamada & Matsumoto in Bangkok, described how Japanese-origin firms used mergers and acquisitions to achieve one-stop, cross-border capability in the face of international competition, while Ashish Razdan, of Khaitan & Co in Mumbai, noted India’s gradual liberalisation and “price-sensitive” market as factors shaping local strategies.

Alberto Navarro, from Buenos Aires firm DS Navarro Castex Abogados, added a note of caution from Latin America, highlighting recurring pitfalls such as “acting in haste” and the danger of dominance by one party.

Moderated by Eduardo Quintanilla, managing partner of Bolivia firm Bufete Aguirre Quintanilla, Soria & Nishizawa and co-chaired by Professor Paul D Paton KC of Chapman University, the session previewed further committee discussions on regulatory sandboxes, alternative business structures and private-equity investment in law.

“Change is coming slowly,” said Paton, who helped write the rules recently loosening law firm ownership in Arizona.

Continued from page 1

mine.” The next day Nixon announced he was resigning.

He added: “The difference here was individuals making assessments and not concealing them. I know there are lots of Republicans who do not like Trump but will not speak on the record. These are profiles in a stunning lack of courage.”

When Ellis asked about the Democrats and their role, Woodward responded: “Trump has rendered the Democratic party weak, and they have rendered themselves weak. We will see who, if anyone, comes out as the Democratic leader. It stuns me, to be perfectly honest, that there is not someone in the Democratic party who has risen to the occasion.”

As the conversation shifted to news coverage of the presidency and the rise of so-called ‘fake news’, Woodward said the media is experiencing a difficult time. “A great deal has shifted and I think we have done it to ourselves by not being rigorous,” he said.

He added that the news media has “relaxed” its standards and relies too often on what he termed “ambiguous attribution” rather than being rigorous in its reporting, relying on first-hand witnesses and documents to ensure journalistic integrity.

“In the media business, we need to go down the path of self-examination,” he said. “We need to source information that is as good as the courtroom. If we don’t have that, don’t publish, don’t broadcast.”

When asked by an audience member about what can be done about this given that Trump was democratically elected, Woodward responded: “Correct what we can in the media. It sounds simple but let’s rely on sources with first-hand and or documentary information.”

Woodward then pulled a small card out of his pocket.

“There is a little card I carry around and it’s very worn,” he said. “The first word on it is ‘risk’. Because of Trump, we are living in risk and the question I ask is when does it become an intolerable risk. I think it’s intolerable now and the question is: what is the road back and who is going to lead us on it.”

Bob Woodward gained international attention when he and Carl Bernstein uncovered the Watergate scandal in 1973. Since then, he has worked to shine a light on the inner workings of secret government. He has won nearly every American journalism award and two Pulitzer Prizes. He is currently an associate editor of the Washington Post where he has worked since 1971.

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IBA to screen film on misuse of UN veto

By Ben Edwards

The IBA human rights law committee is hosting a film screening of *The Veto* on Wednesday evening, a documentary produced by Tim Slade about the use of veto power within the United Nations Security Council.

The documentary shines a spotlight on the UN Security Council permanent member veto power, which has been the subject of constant debate for almost 80 years, not least when vetoes are cast in the face of genocide, wars crimes and crimes against humanity.

Slade talks to leading global experts, and through survivor testimony, makes a persuasive case for accountability and

institutional reform in order to break the Security Council deadlock.

The documentary highlights how that veto power has been increasingly misused to aid crime.

The screening will take place at Cody Hall, St Paul’s Bloor Church, 227 Bloor Street East, Toronto tonight from 7pm until 10.05pm.

The film screening will open with a networking reception with wine, canapés and other refreshments. A panel discussion will be moderated by IBA executive director Mark Ellis.

The IBA human rights committee is hosting the event alongside the IBA war crimes committee, the IBA Rule of Law Forum, IBA’s Human Rights Institute and Amiri Law Firm.

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Law firms have to 'walk the talk' on ethical behaviour to ensure lawyers follow suit

By Ben Edwards

Law firms have a professional duty to their clients and a commercial imperative to make money, but they also have a duty to ensure their lawyers are conducting themselves in an ethical manner.

Speaking at yesterday morning's session How law firms can or should promote professional ethics? (as compared to the Bar Associations and Law Societies promoting professional ethics), moderator and chair Richard Dudelzak KC from Canadian firm Dudelzak & Co, gave each panellist an opportunity to discuss the ethical issues that most resonate with them.

Subrata Bhattacharjee, a partner at Borden Ladner Gervais in Toronto, discussed issues around a decline in civility impacting firms, such as bullying, professional courtesy and a lack of responsiveness to other lawyers. Such uncivil conduct can have a significant impact on lawyers' mental health, but it can also impact public perceptions of the legal profession, he said. The challenge is defining what civility actually means.

"We want more of it, but what exactly is that?" said Bhattacharjee. "And more importantly, if it's something we want, can we actually enforce this through rules of professional conduct and regulation?"

There is also a tension between enforcing civil conduct and adversarial proceedings where there may be a need for zealous advocacy from lawyers to make a point that may help a firm to win a case.

Some legal practitioners believe that questions of ethics need to go beyond compliance in order to build a robust ethics culture within firms.

Swee Yen Koh SC, senior counsel at Wong Partnership in Singapore, believes that young lawyers need to understand that the practice of law must always be values driven.

"The best way to move beyond a culture of compliance and to make this deep-rooted within each individual comes from leaders in the firm – they have to walk the talk and lead by example," she said. "When you have a very fresh graduate who comes and joins you for the first time, he or she needs to understand that the whole firm is grounded in a value system."

This can often conflict with commercial realities and the need to ensure a firm is



The panel (l-r): Richard Dudelzak KC, Swee Yen Koh, Steven Richman, Sara Carnegie and Rachel Hussey

profitable, which is why leadership is critical, she added.

Another area that is raising potential ethical issues is the rise of AI and its increased use in legal work by law firms, particularly around client confidentiality and data security.

Rachel Hussey, a partner at Arthur Cox in Ireland, said that one of the challenges with generative AI is that it is a developing technology, with clients often pulling in different directions. Sometimes they ask for it not to be used on matters and at other times they want to know how firms are proposing to use Gen AI and how it could help reduce fees.

"Firms need to be very clear about what AI can be used for and be sure that the lawyers in the firm know its limitations," she said, adding that it is essential to have human oversight.

"I heard a soundbite recently, which is good for us all to remember in our day to day lives that Gen AI is not designed to be right, it's designed to sound right," said Hussey. This means firms need to ensure lawyers are double checking all AI outputs.

Another challenge is that law firms are often trying to navigate this landscape without any formal guidance.

"It's incumbent that as a profession as a whole, we agree what the guardrails are, because at the moment, we have firms trying to work out on their own what they're going to do in their own particular firm," said Hussey.

In certain jurisdictions such as the US, when it comes to rules of conduct, often they are

focused on the individual lawyer, even though any wrongdoing would be imputed to the firm.

Firms therefore need supervisory rules in place to ensure they have taken reasonable steps to require ethical behaviour from their lawyers, said Steven Richman, chair of the Bar Issues Commission.

"If the reasonable steps are not in place, you have a problem," he said. "It's important to emphasise and build a culture in the firm that ethics is everybody's responsibility."

If there is an issue where firms are unsure if it crosses an ethical line, Richman's advice is clear.

"If you have to think about it, the answer is always no," he said.

The IBA has also been doing significant amounts of work on promoting ethical legal practice through the professional ethics committee, the regulation of lawyers committee and other initiatives, said Sara Carnegie, director of legal projects at the IBA.

Carnegie referenced former Canadian Supreme Court judge Rosalie Abella's speech at Sunday's opening ceremony where she talked about the courage and strength of legal practitioners to stand up for what is right.

"That really resonated with me as a sense of frustration and despair at how divided the profession has become over recent years, with perhaps even more recent examples of where a concern for making money and just keeping your head down overrides what may be the principled right thing to do," she said.

The (legal) insiders' guide to Toronto,

Local IBA delegates pick their favourite places to visit, eat, drink and dance in a city renowned for its neighbourhoods



The CN Tower lookout

BOBNOAH / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



Leila Rafi
Partner
McMillan

I grew up in Toronto, which is full of diversity and vibrancy. When I think about Toronto for a first-time visitor, must see/dos include climbing the CN Tower, one of the tallest free-standing structures in the world; walking around St Lawrence Market to grab fresh goodies from local vendors and farmers; a stroll through cobblestone laneways in the high fashion district of Yorkville; and the unique art at the Royal Ontario Museum.



Royal Ontario Museum



Soma Ray-Ellis
Partner & Chair Employment
and Labour Law Group
Gardiner Roberts

I highly recommend Amal, the Michelin-recommended restaurant in Yorkville for its warm ambiance and authentic Lebanese flavours that transport you straight to Lebanon. The mezze selection is outstanding and the service is always impeccable. It's my top choice for both business lunches and relaxed dinners.



Natasha MacParland
Partner
Davies Ward Phillips & Vineberg

Epoch Bar & Kitchen Terrace at the Ritz-Carlton is one of my favourites – sophisticated yet welcoming, with attentive service and a refined menu that makes it perfect for a memorable meal or cocktail. For a more casual stop, the Ritz-Carlton cafe is my go-to for great coffee and pastries in a relaxed setting.



Christina Doria
Partner, Disputes Resolution
Practice
Baker & McKenzie

I recommend strolling through Yorkville, a charming neighbourhood, with boutique shops, galleries and cozy cafés. For dinner, try Alobar Yorkville, Osteria Giulia or The Oxley gastropub – each offers something unique. Afterwards, enjoy gelato at The Gelato Shop or classic ice cream at Summer's. To end the evening, head to the Writers Room Bar on the 17th floor of the Park Hyatt Toronto for a cocktail and great city views.

a city 'full of diversity and vibrancy'



Shane Pearlman
Partner
Borden Ladner Gervais

Toronto is a city of distinct neighbourhoods, each with its own character and energy. Between conference sessions, take a stroll through the boutiques of Yorkville, experience the buzz along Ossington or enjoy the historic charm of the Distillery District. Toronto is best experienced by walking its streets.



Mario Paura
Partner
Stikeman Elliott

Blue Bovine is my cool vibe for an el-toro espresso martini, juicy steaks, fresh sushi and a live DJ to keep the energy high.



Katherine Hutchinson
Director, International Business
Development & Client Engagement
Bennett Jones

Toronto's downtown hides a menagerie for you to find as you walk between meetings. Spot the bronze cows lounging outside the Toronto-Dominion Centre and a fountain of dogs and lions outside the Bank of Montreal.



Hockey Hall of Fame

LAGUTKIN ALEXEY / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



The Toronto Winter Village at the Distillery District

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Todd Burke
Partner and Leader,
International Sales
Gowling WLG

Whenever work brings me to Toronto, I try to make it to Richmond Station. It's one of those spots that never disappoints - great energy, incredible food and a menu that always feels fresh. A perfect way to end a busy day in the city.



Vaughn MacLellan
Managing Partner - Toronto
DLA Piper

Enjoy a walk along our beautiful Lake Ontario waterfront. Learn more about our national sport (obsession!) at the Hockey Hall of Fame. Check out our fantastic collection at the Art Gallery of Ontario and stroll through our unique Kensington Market. Relax with a pint and oysters at John & Sons Oyster House on Temperance Street or cocktails and small plates at the stylish Clockwork lounge in our iconic Fairmont Royal York. Connect, learn and have fun!



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beautywellnesslawsummit.com



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Justice in wartime: how the IBA is supporting Ukraine's legal frontline

Since the outbreak of war in Ukraine in 2022, the IBA has remained a steadfast ally to Ukrainian lawyers, championing the rule of law amid unprecedented turmoil, reports Ben Rigby

From mentoring war crimes prosecutors to lobbying for international tribunals, the IBA's multifaceted support has become a cornerstone of Ukraine's legal resilience.

Following its 2024 meeting in Mexico City, the IBA intensified its efforts, even as diplomatic attempts to end the conflict faltered. In June, the IBA partnered with JustTalk Ukraine to host a pivotal event in Kyiv, exploring the role of emerging technologies in military conflict.

The gathering featured experts and international partners, including eyeWitness to Atrocities – an initiative founded by the IBA that captures tamper-proof evidence of human rights violations. The event underscored the risks and potential of integrating technology into justice systems during wartime.

July saw another milestone: a joint mentoring programme with the Ukrainian Bar Association (UBA) aimed at supporting legal professionals handling war crimes cases. The pilot initiative paired global experts in international humanitarian and criminal law with three Ukrainian legal practitioners – a judge, a prosecutor and a defence lawyer. Among the mentors were IBA executive director Mark Ellis, seasoned judges and human rights academics. The programme emphasised tailored, practical guidance to help Ukraine navigate the complex terrain of justice and accountability.

"It is heartening that the IBA's ongoing assistance to its members in Ukraine, the country's wider legal profession and our productive collaboration with the UBA are so well received," said IBA president Jaime Carey. "The principles of justice, the rule of law and the international legal order are under threat, and this mentoring scheme is a step toward reinforcing those values."

Beyond mentoring, the IBA has also focused on the broader humanitarian impact of the conflict. Its digital content has highlighted the plight of Ukrainian refugees and the urgent need for a coordinated international response. In August, the IBA Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI) published a paper in collaboration with the Bring Kids Back UA Task Force, examining the abduction and repatriation of children in conflict zones. Drawing on global case studies, the paper offered insights to strengthen Ukraine's approach to child protection and reintegration.

The IBA's commitment to nurturing future legal leaders was evident at the 2025 Criminal Justice Summer School in Kyiv. Co-sponsored by the IBA, the programme brought together promising young lawyers for intensive training in criminal justice. Tutors included Ellis, Kirsty Sutherland (co-chair of the IBA War Crimes Committee) and Dmytro Hladkyi, local coordinator of eyeWitness to Atrocities.

A highlight of the summer school was a session at the Supreme Court of Ukraine, where students engaged with high-ranking officials, including Deputy Prosecutor General Andriy Leshchenko, Ambassador-at-Large Anton Korynevych, and Judge Mykola Mazur. Ellis, speaking via video link from London, emphasised the importance of maintaining fair legal proceedings.

"Even amid the extraordinary and unprecedented challenges facing Ukraine as a result of Russia's brutal actions, the fairness of national



War crimes prosecutors and police at the scene of an airstrike in Kharkiv last year

legal proceedings must not be compromised," Ellis said, adding that "programmes such as the Criminal Justice Summer School are essential to sustaining a legal culture grounded in integrity, human rights and accountability".

The IBA has also played a leading role in advocating for the establishment of a Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression in Ukraine.

In September, it hosted a high-level event in The Hague, co-hosted by the Ukrainian Embassy and the Dutch government. Attendees included Korynevych, Andriy Kostin, Ukraine's ambassador to the Netherlands and former prosecutor general, IBA President-Elect Claudio Visco and Ellis.

This was the fourth in a series of IBA-hosted events in 2025, following similar gatherings in Washington DC, Geneva and Kyiv. The IBA and IBAHRI have also collaborated with several European nations and NGOs to promote the tribunal at United Nations side meetings.

Ellis, in remarks delivered on International Criminal Justice Day, on 17 July, urged other states to support the initiative.

"The creation of this special tribunal affirms the principle that the crime of aggression – the supreme international crime – must not go unpunished," Ellis said. "For the Ukrainian people, who continue to endure the consequences of Russia's unlawful invasion, this tribunal offers a long-overdue legal mechanism for justice. It is now the responsibility of the international community to ensure its success."

This afternoon, the IBAHRI is hosting a session that will explore how lessons learned from the concerted drive to bring the perpetrators of the Ukraine war to justice "can help to make the principle of universal jurisdiction more widely used.

SESSION: No sanctuary for perpetrators of international crime: the use of universal jurisdiction in the pursuit of justice

TIME: Today (14:30-15:45)

LOCATION: Room 715 A, Level 700

IBA 2025 Toronto

Key sessions to look out for during a week that will set the agenda for global law at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre



Wednesday

13:15-14:15

A conversation about the state of international law under the new Trump era

Room 718 A, Level 700

This panel, moderated by the IBA's executive director, Mark Ellis, features a top line-up of leading figures in international law. They include Arnold & Porter partner John B. Bellinger III, former legal adviser to the US Department of State under Secretary Condoleezza Rice; former Canadian minister of justice and attorney general Irwin Cotler; and Judge Kimberly Prost, who serves on the International Criminal Court and previously held senior roles at the UN and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. The line-up is completed by Alberto Mora, a senior fellow at Harvard Kennedy School's Carr Center for Human Rights Policy and former general counsel of the US Navy; Michael Scharf, associate dean for global affairs at Case Western Reserve University School of Law; and Beth Van Schaack, Stanford Law School professor and former US ambassador-at-large for global criminal justice.

14:30-17:30

Bar Issues Committee Showcase – time to let go – defining legal services and the role of lawyers

Room 716 A, Level 700



Hoda Abdel-Moneim



Oluwafunke Adeoye



Arfat Selvam

Chaired by Bar Issues Committee (BIC) officer Claudia Amore, executive director of the Colombian firm Cámara de Servicios Legales – ANDI, this session will explore how the legal profession is evolving in light of the growing provision of traditional legal services by non-lawyers and other licensed professionals. Among the speakers are Christina Blacklaws, former president of the Law Society of England and Wales and founder of Blacklaws Consulting; Teresa Donnelly, president of the Federation of Law Societies of Canada; Vincent Maurel, a partner at KPMG Avocats in Paris and a member of the executive board of the Conseil National des Barreaux, the national representative body for French lawyers; and Tshepo Shabangu, vice chair of the IBA Bar Issues Commission and past president of the Law Society of South Africa.



US President Donald Trump

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Thursday

08:00-09:15

Section on Public and Professional Interest Awards breakfast

Room 5, Level 500

This breakfast will feature the presentation of the Section on Public and Professional Interest (SPPI) Awards. Egyptian human rights lawyer Hoda Abdel-Moneim, who is currently imprisoned in Egypt amid a broader crackdown on human rights defenders and lawyers in the country is the winner of the IBA Award for Outstanding Contribution by a Legal Practitioner to Human Rights, selected for her record in defending freedoms, championing women's and children's rights and the fight against enforced disappearances. Also being recognised is Nigerian lawyer Oluwafunke Adeoye, who is collecting the IBA Outstanding Young Lawyer Award for her "legal brilliance" and her "passion for justice". Singapore corporate lawyer Arfat Selvam is due to pick up the IBA Pro Bono Award for her efforts to improve access to justice. The awards are supported by LexisNexis.

9:30-10:45 and 11:15-12:30

SPPI Showcase – Law not war: parts one and two

Room 716 A, Level 700

This SPPI showcase will explore how lawyers can use law and legal procedures to broker

peace talks and bring war crimes to justice. Among an array of top speakers is Dr Olufemi Elias, judge ad hoc at the International Court of Justice, who will deliver a keynote speech. The distinguished international jurist currently serves as president of the Administrative Tribunal of the OPEC Fund in Vienna and chair of the Administrative Tribunal of the Islamic Development Bank in Jeddah. The proceedings will be chaired by the SPPI's co-chairs, Dr Babatunde Ajibade SAN, managing partner of S P A Ajibade & Co in Lagos, and Kirsty Sutherland, a barrister at 9 Bedford Row Chambers in London and co-chair of the IBA War Crimes Committee.

Friday

09:00-15:00

The Rule of Law Symposium

Room 716 A, Level 700

Organised by the Rule of Law Forum, this annual symposium underscores the IBA's commitment to promoting and defending the rule of law worldwide. This year's programme will feature three thought-provoking sessions that will bring together leading practitioners, policymakers and academics to debate the global challenges facing the rule of law and reaffirm the legal profession's vital role in upholding justice and accountability. The symposium, which includes lunch, is free to attend, including for those who are not registered to attend the conference although they must register by Wednesday 5 November. The online registration form can be found at ibanet.org.

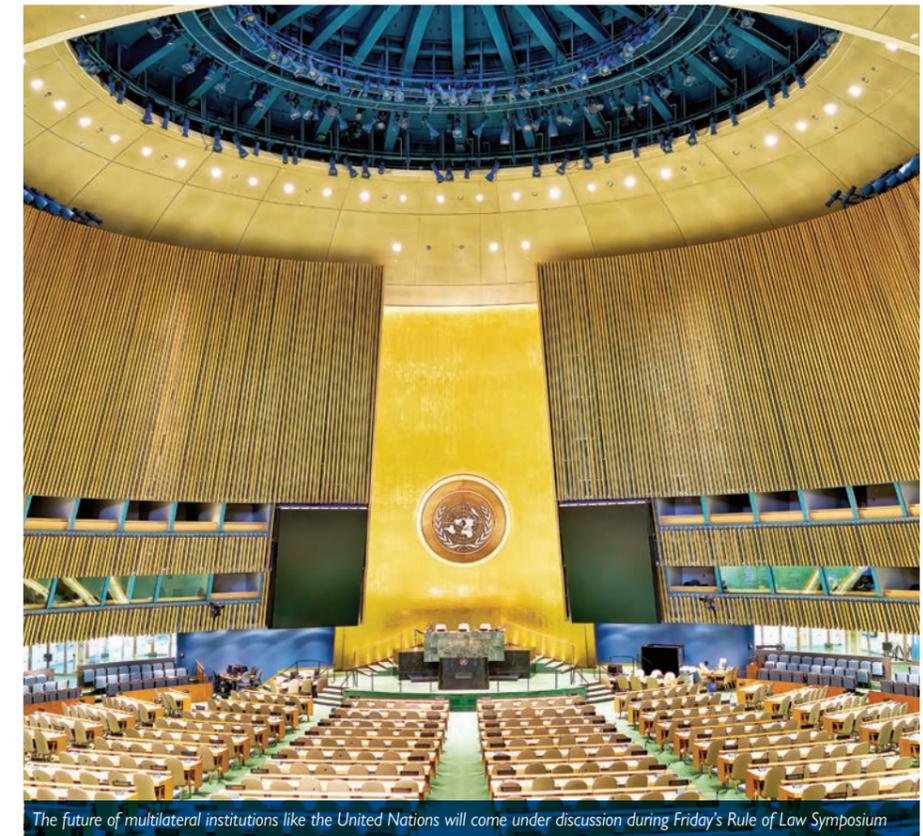
09:00-10:45 Session One

The future of multilateralism: international law and institutions in an era of impunity and great power competition

An expert panel will discuss the implications of the rise of a multipolar world and intensifying geopolitical conflicts, which are undermining international law and multinational institutions. A 19th-century-style great power competition has made a comeback, with the United States retreating from historic commitments to

The ever-popular Law Rocks! returns to the IBA Annual Conference for a fundraising night of music, performed by talented lawyer musicians. This battle of the bands in support of the IBA's

Human Rights Institute has been rocking the IBA since 2013. It will take place at The Concert Hall, Yonge St, from 19:30 tomorrow (Thursday). Tickets are available at: lawrocks.org/iba-toronto



The future of multilateral institutions like the United Nations will come under discussion during Friday's Rule of Law Symposium
MB_PHOTOGRAPHER / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

alliances and multilateralism. The discussion will explore what the future might hold for international law, international institutions and multilateral cooperation. It will be led by Federica D'Alessandra, deputy director of the University of Oxford's Institute for Ethics Law and Armed Conflict, director of the Oxford Programme on International Peace and Security and non-resident fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

11:00-12:30 Session Two

Civility and the legal profession

This panel will examine how smartphones, social media, political polarisation and social isolation have deepened societal divisions and impacted the legal profession, which faces accusations of "lawfare" from across the political spectrum. Panellists will explore how lawyers can both contribute to these divisions, on the one hand, and help heal them through dialogue, reconciliation and fair

legal practice. This session will be moderated by New York-based Holland & Knight partner Robert Bernstein, co-chair of the IBA Project Establishment Subcommittee.

13:30-15:00 Session Three

Sanctions: economic warfare and the law

With international conflicts increasingly fought through economic as well as conventional means, sanctions have become a rapidly evolving area of legal practice. This panel will explore the role of sanctions as non-judicial tools of international law enforcement and examine key concerns, including their impact on access to justice, legal representation, and the role of lawyers, business, and the administration of justice during times of conflict. This session will be chaired by Michael Polak, secretary-treasurer of the Rule of Law Forum, of Church Court Chambers in London.

Market expectations on AI are 'dangerously' wide of reality

By Ben Edwards

Legal professionals are reporting a wide gap between expectations and reality when it comes to AI, according to a recent IBA survey, presented at Monday's session, AI's impact on the legal profession: from threat to game-changing advantage.

Presented by THE SWITCH's Itzik Amiel, chair of the Law Firm Management Committee's business development and marketing subcommittee, and Martijn Lesterhuis, chief strategy officer at legaltech company Saga in Amsterdam, the session explored the IBA's ongoing research into AI usage across the profession.

Delegates were encouraged to complete Phase Two of the IBA's AI Impact survey (visit www.ibanet.org/AI-Surveys to find out more) as they digested the findings of the first survey, which was published in October last year.

That research found that while 80% of legal professionals expect to see a high impact from AI on legal work over the next five years, only 38% expect to see transformational, high-level change in their organisations this year.

Amiel and Lesterhuis called this "a dangerous gap", which could potentially impact AI adoption if expectations fall short.

Adoption is already facing several barriers. The survey showed that 24% of respondents are worried about an overreliance on tech at the expense of professional skills development, while 15% are still concerned about privacy and confidentiality issues. Some 14% are also worried that AI may be used for malicious purposes, while 13% are concerned about data security. A further 9% fear that AI will lead to job losses.

Another challenge the report highlighted is that few firms have an AI strategy in place, with just 13% of respondents saying they have such a strategy. This matters because organisations that have an AI strategy are four times more likely to experience benefits when adopting AI.

"In short, intentional AI adoption leads to ROI," said Amiel. "If you're intentional and you know what you're doing and involve everybody, you're going to see in the very short term a higher return on investment."

This means focusing not just on buying AI tools but really thinking about what the impact is going to be on legal work processes and how it will impact clients, said Lesterhuis.



Martijn Lesterhuis (left) and Itzik Amiel (right)

Some firms are already seeing the benefits by taking this approach. Session speaker Giedre Aukstuliene, a partner from Lithuanian firm Ellex said the main benefit for her firm so far was efficiency.

"When you show to people how it's possible to deal with your tasks in much more efficient way, people become excited," she said. "And when they become excited, they share these success stories. And then when the real change is happening you get the snowball effect."

Pranav Srivastava, a New Delhi-based partner from Indian firm Phoenix Legal and co-vice chair of the Young Lawyers Committee, also believes AI could also solve burnout issues for young lawyers and potentially improve work-life balance.

"The burnouts were happening because they were reading reams of pages which were not very interesting," he said.

With AI handling much of that heavy document review and information collection work, young lawyers are now able to apply their judgement and skills, making their jobs more rewarding.

Amiel said the real differentiator, however, when it comes to using AI was applying creative thinking to find new ways to use the technology. This will become increasingly important as adoption grows and everyone has access to the same tools.

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Our IBA team: Back row (l to r): Mevan Bandara, Shahram Safai, Saurbh Kothari, Chatura Randeniya
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