



The Law Society  
of England and Wales

International



[www.lawsociety.org.uk/international](http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/international)

# The Rule of Law

International department  
of the Law Society of  
England and Wales





The Law Society's mandate is to represent, promote and support all solicitors allowing them to assist their clients in a more effective manner. We are committed to emphasising the vital role legal services play in all aspects of society including upholding the rule of law and defending human rights. We also aim to ensure that no-one is above the law and to protect everyone's right to have access to justice.

Our rule of law and human rights work attracts interest across the spectrum of our membership through our involvement in international projects and the engagement of established and aspiring lawyers looking for opportunities to contribute to the international work of the Law Society whilst establishing relationships with their colleagues abroad.

We recognise that the added value of our work lies in bringing together the expertise of our members in the public interest, rule of law and human rights work as well as standing in solidarity with fellow lawyers around the world.

## The Rule of Law programmes

Respect for the rule of law and its principles is of the utmost importance to safeguard the independence of the judiciary and the legal profession. This is fundamental for establishing a reliable and credible judicial system that will have the required legitimacy for its effective operation. Lawyers are perfectly positioned to play a vital role in upholding the rule of law and human rights. They help in establishing and maintaining democracies, and in building prosperous economies due to their skills and position in society.

The access to justice of all citizens to hold governments and other actors to account depends on the independence of the legal profession. This is a fundamental element to every democracy, in which lawyers are active participants in the exercise of the rule of law. An independent and empowered legal profession and judiciary can help to strengthen governance structures by institutionalising rule of law principles. This would ensure that the judiciary

operates with independence and the legal profession is free to carry out its duties without improper interference.

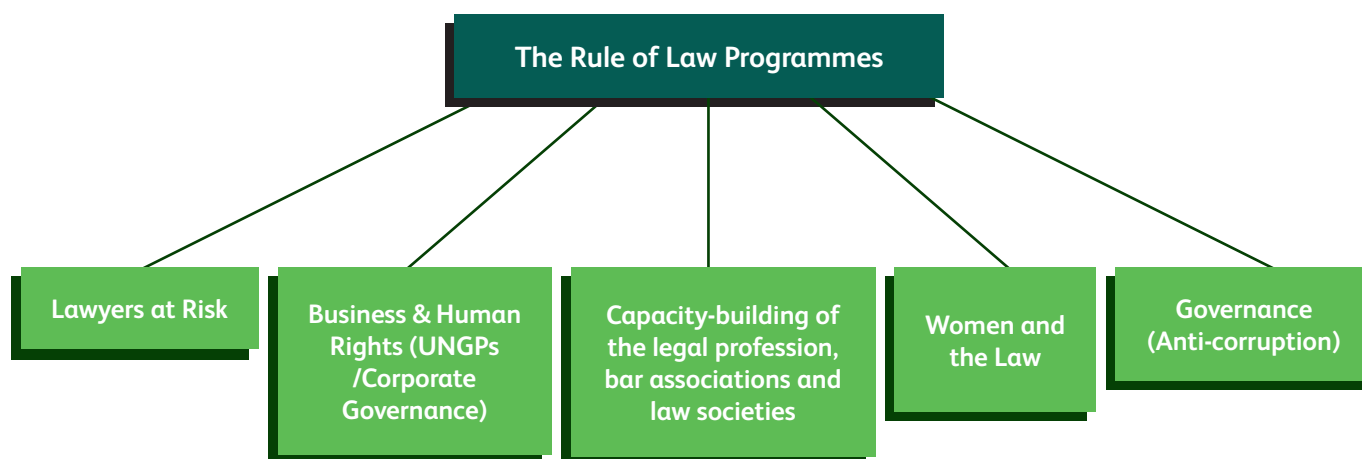
The rule of law ensures that governments exercise their authority in accordance with a legal framework that assures individual freedoms and national development based on: clear objective laws publicly shared; and a diverse, competent and independent legal profession. An independent, impartial, and competent judiciary and an equally independent and effective legal system are primordial elements that serve to uphold the rule of law, which in turn generates public confidence in the dispensation of justice.

We regularly receive project requests directly from foreign bar associations, our members, foreign lawyers and foreign Ministries of Justice amongst others. These requests range from commercially focused initiatives to proposed human rights and rule of law projects. The rule of law portfolio and its associated programmes were developed so that we can respond in a more structured and consistent manner to the needs of our members, as well as the requests for assistance made by foreign bars and lawyers.

The Rule of Law portfolio comprises five programmes: Lawyers at Risk, Business & Human Rights (e.g. UNGPs, Corporate Governance), capacity-building of the legal profession, bar associations and law societies, Women and the Law (e.g. Business, Women & the Law, Anti-discrimination Laws) and Governance (e.g. Anti-Corruption). The strategy of the Lawyers at Risk programme has been finalised (detailed below), whereas the other four programmes are in development.

We work in partnership with Bar associations overseas to deliver projects. These aim to promote and protect human rights, build legal capacity, support the rule of law, and encourage economic development.

We have been granted special consultative status to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations.



## The Lawyers at Risk programme

Our Lawyers at Risk programme supports lawyers who are hindered in carrying out their professional duties through threats, intimidation, disciplinary measures, disappearance or murder. This support is provided through intervention letters sent to State authorities regarding specific cases, but also through structural work to improve lawyers' safety. The Law Society, therefore, responds to individual cases of lawyers under threat, but also aims to address the structural causes that give rise to such threats. We submit amicus curiae briefs to domestic courts and international tribunals to achieve law reform and change practices that are detrimental to the effective functioning of the judicial system.

We make use of our ECOSOC consultative status with the United Nations to make submissions to UN treaty bodies, UN Human Rights Council and UN Special Rapporteurs. We collaborate with a network of NGOs, international institutions, State agencies, and Bar associations for advocacy and follow-up on interventions and submissions. All interventions and follow-up actions are included in the Law Society's

Intervention Tracker. This tracker compiles the data and allows for analyses regarding, for example, regional trends of intimidation and the identification of places where the independence of the legal profession is particularly threatened.

In accordance with the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, the Law Society's Lawyers at Risk programme also supports human rights defenders who exercise the functions of a lawyer and legal assistants, as well as those lawyers who have lost their license to practise, have been disbarred, or have not been admitted to the Bar for reasons other than proven misconduct.

The Lawyers at Risk programme aims to raise awareness of the risks and challenges associated with being a lawyer and the importance of the independence of the legal profession, as well as to foster professional solidarity with colleagues abroad. The work of the Lawyers at Risk programme is supported by the International Action Team (IAT), a volunteer group that consists of practising solicitors, barristers, and law students.



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