



The International Rule of Law Programmes

International department of the Law Society of England and Wales



Respect for the rule of law and its principles are of the utmost importance in safeguarding 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, as their skills and influence within society can help in establishing and maintaining democracies and in building prosperous economies.

Access to justice for all citizens, to hold governments and other actors to account, depends entirely on the independence of the legal profession and the judiciary. This would ensure that the judicial system operates with impartiality and the legal profession is free to carry out its duties without improper interference, which in turn generates public confidence in the dispensation of justice.

The Law Society's mandate is to represent, promote, and support all solicitors, and in so doing allow 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 endeavour to protect everyone's right to have access to justice and to ensure that no one is above the law.

Our international public interest work attracts attention from across the spectrum of our membership through our involvement in international projects. Established and aspiring lawyers look for opportunities to contribute to the Law Society's rule of law and human rights work, whilst building partnerships with their colleagues in

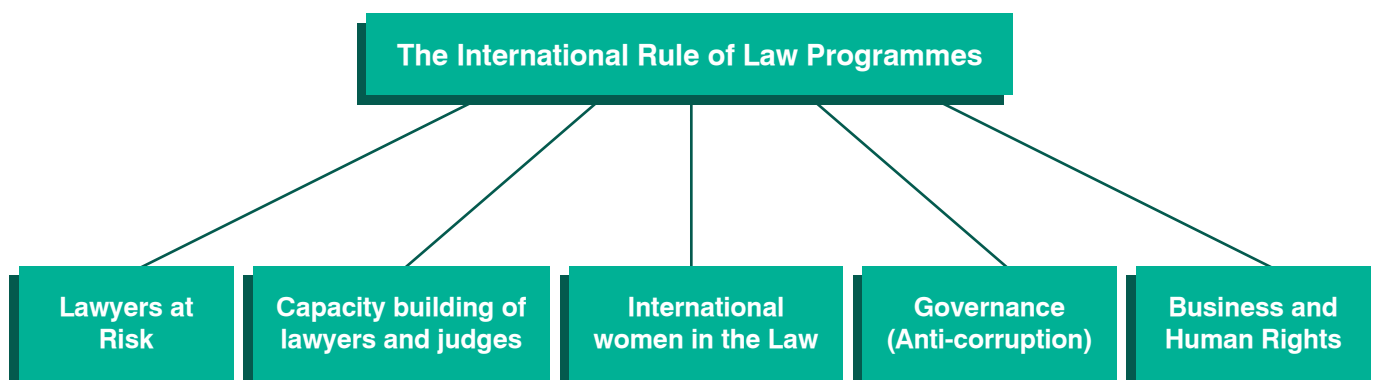
other countries. We bring together the expertise of our members and stand in solidarity with fellow lawyers around the world.

The International Rule of Law programmes

The Law Society's international rule of law programmes are designed so that we can respond in a more strategic, structured, and consistent manner to the needs of our members and the requests for assistance by law societies, lawyers, foreign bars, and judges.

The international rule of law programmes consists of five sub-programmes: Lawyers at Risk, Capacity Building of the legal profession and judiciary, International Women and the Law, Governance (Anti-Corruption) and Business & Human Rights.

The Law Society has been granted special consultative status to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations since March 2014. We make use of our ECOSOC consultative status to organise side events,



make oral statements before the UN Human Rights Council, and make submissions to the UN treaty bodies, UN Human Rights Council, UN Special Rapporteurs, UN Commission on the Status of Women among others. We also collaborate with a network of other Law Societies, Bar Associations, NGOs, academics, international institutions, and other relevant stakeholders for advocacy and follow-ups.

We work in partnership with Law Societies, Bar Associations, lawyers, judges and other relevant stakeholders to deliver projects overseas. These aim to promote and protect human rights, build legal capacity, support the rule of law, and encourage economic development.

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The Lawyers at Risk programme

The Law Society's Lawyers at Risk programme supports lawyers who are hindered - either through threats, intimidation, unsubstantiated disciplinary measures, disappearances, or murder - in carrying out their professional duties. This support is provided through intervention letters sent to state authorities concerning specific cases, but also through substantive policy work to address the structural causes that give rise to such threats. For example, we submit amicus curiae briefs to domestic courts and international tribunals to change practices that are detrimental to the effective functioning of the judicial system. The International Action Team (IAT) - a group of volunteers that consists of practising solicitors, barristers, and law students - supports the work of the Lawyers at Risk programme.

All interventions and follow-up actions are included in the annual Law Society Intervention Tracker. This tracker compiles the data and allows for analysis 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 supports human rights defenders (HRDs) who exercise the functions of lawyers and/or legal assistants. We further support 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.

Capacity Building of the legal profession and the judiciary programme

The Law Society's Capacity Building programme aims to support, develop, and facilitate academic, practical, and professional opportunities for Law Societies, Bar Associations, lawyers and judges, to enable them to maximise their individual and collective capabilities. NGOs and civil society organisations, working mainly in the provision of legal assistance, are also considered as potential participants.

We design bespoke training programmes that facilitate the transfer of technical expertise and knowledge from England & Wales to other jurisdictions, supporting a continuous process of professional development, as well as promoting new skills and innovation. An essential part of this programme is the interactive dialogue between representatives from different jurisdictions and Law Society members.

International Women and the Law programme

The Law Society's International Women and the Law (IWIL) programme seeks to increase and actively support efforts to achieve gender equality within the legal profession and the judiciary, creating solidarity linkages and collaborative projects around the world. Its strategy is to promote greater participation and leadership of women within the sector and generate best practices that can be shared with others.

We also aim to challenge and confront unconscious bias within the legal profession by breaking down women's invisibility and highlighting female role models in senior positions. Moreover, we aim to create more opportunities for women by facilitating discussions through international roundtables, creating opportunities for exchanges, developing best practice toolkits, and providing education and training opportunities, including mentoring and coaching.



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