



SOLIDARITY WITH LAWYERS AT RISK: UK BARRISTERS FOCUS ON EGYPT ON INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE ENDANGERED LAWYER

24 JANUARY 2018

On the 8th international Day of the Endangered Lawyer, the Bar Council and the Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales (BHRC) together with lawyers' organisations in Europe and around the world, stand in solidarity with those lawyers in Egypt who face persecution in furtherance of the protection of the rule of law. This is also the day to remember lawyers at risk across the world.

For the protection these lawyers afford to others, they are often watched, tracked, falsely prosecuted, deprived of their liberty, or even killed. Each of those instances is a serious threat not only to those lawyers, but to the meaningful protection of the rights they seek to defend.

Egypt

For 2018, the Day of the Endangered Lawyer is focused on Egypt, in light of [widespread credible reports](#) from human rights organisations that Egyptian authorities are “rapidly taking concrete steps to shut down the last critical voices in the country’s human rights community.”

Since 2013, fundamental human rights, including the right to a fair trial and freedom of expression and assembly, have been diminished on an ongoing basis by broad security legislation. In the last two years, there has been an increase in the number of arrests of lawyers who provide counsel and representation to human rights defenders, many of whom face extended pre-trial detention without a reasoned decision for refusing conditional release. There are widespread reports from international organisations that those in detention are at risk of torture and degrading treatment.

Kirsty Brimelow QC, Chair of BHRC, said:

“In 2016, BHRC, called upon the President of Egypt to [end the persecution against lawyers in Egypt](#).

“The Egyptian government continues to issue travel bans, freeze assets and detain human rights lawyers as part of an ongoing and sustained campaign to intimidate and undermine their work.

“Prominent figures currently facing persecution include [Azza Soliman](#), a women’s rights lawyer and co-founder of the Centre for Egyptian Women’s Legal Assistance (CEWLA), [Malek Adly](#), a human rights lawyer and director of Lawyers Network at the Egyptian Centre for Economic and Social Rights (ECESR), and Khalid Ali, a workers’ rights lawyer. . They have been subject travel bans, asset freezes, imprisonment with hallmarks of solitary confinement, beatings and denial of family and lawyer visitation.

“On this important day, BHRC condemns this campaign to intimidate and undermine the work of these lawyers and others like them in Egypt.”

Andrew Walker QC, Chair of the Bar Council, said:

“Through the intimidation of lawyers, authorities dismantle and undermine the fundamental freedoms of their citizens. For the rule of law to exist, citizens (and others) *must* have a right of access to an independent lawyer who is able to defend their freedoms without fear or interference, and to ensure that their individual rights are protected against abuses and excesses of power by the state and by those acting in its name. On this Day of the Endangered Lawyer, the Bar Council along with BHRC stands in solidarity with those lawyers across the world, and in particular the lawyers of Egypt, who show courage and determination in striving to uphold the rule of law in the face of persecution.”

BHRC and Bar Council reiterate the call for the Egyptian government to take immediate steps to:

1. Cease the continuing arrests and detention of lawyers for reasons related to the performance of their professional functions
2. Review and, where appropriate, withdraw all investigations and criminal charges against such lawyers
3. Restore and guarantee respect for the rights of lawyers and human rights defenders
4. Release all lawyers currently being detained in violation of international human rights laws and standards and domestic obligations
5. Ensure full protection for lawyers from further intimidation, harassment or obstruction in the performance of their professional duties
6. Respond favourably to the request of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers to conduct a country visit to Egypt and permit the visit, and
7. Reaffirm and uphold Egypt’s commitment to the rule of law and human rights.

Notes to Editors

1. [The Day of the Endangered Lawyer](#) – 24th January – was founded and is organised by the Foundation for the Day of the Endangered Lawyer, based in Haarlem, the Netherlands. The date was chosen because on 24th January 1977, four lawyers and a co-worker were murdered at their office in Madrid, Spain. This was also known as the Massacre of Atocha.
2. The Day honours lawyers across the world who put themselves at risk in the fight for human rights and the rule of law. It aims to create awareness that the practice of the legal profession in many countries involves significant risks, but also to denounce the situation in a particular country where lawyers are victims of serious violations of their fundamental rights because of the exercise of their profession. Each year, the persecution of lawyers in a particular country is highlighted, and the Foundation coordinates activities outside that country's embassies across the world. Previous Days of the Endangered Lawyer have expressed concern for lawyers in Iran (2010), Turkey (2012), Basque Country/Spain (2013), Colombia (2014), the Philippines (2015), Honduras (2016), and China (2017).
3. The Bar Council represents barristers in England and Wales. It promotes:
 - The Bar's high quality specialist advocacy and advisory services
 - Fair access to justice for all
 - The highest standards of ethics, equality and diversity across the profession, and
 - The development of business opportunities for barristers at home and abroad.

The General Council of the Bar is the Approved Regulator of the Bar of England and Wales. It discharges its regulatory functions through the independent [Bar Standards Board](#).

4. [The Bar Human Rights Committee](#) is the independent, international human rights arm of the Bar of England and Wales. It is dedicated to promoting justice and respect for human rights through the rule of law.