



## Joint Statement on the arrest of lawyers in Iran

The Bar Council of England and Wales and the Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales (BHRC) join the international legal community's call on the Iranian Government to end the arrest, detention, and intimidation of lawyers in Iran. These attacks represent a grave threat to the rule of law, and place Iran in breach of its international obligations.

Lawyers perform a vital function in upholding the rule of law and the protection of human rights. Prompt access to legal representation is a vital safeguard against torture, ill-treatment, and due process violations. Lawyers must be allowed to perform their professional duties without fear of intimidation, harassment, arrest, or prosecution simply for discharging those duties.

Protests across Iran began following the death on 16 September 2022 of 22-year-old Mahsa (Jini) Amini after her arrest and death. Subsequently there have been mass arrests and violence against protesters, including the use of excessive and lethal force.

[Lawyers are reportedly among at least ninety members of civil society arrested since protests began](#), including at least three lawyers arrested outside the Iranian Bar Association in Tehran on 12 October 2022 whilst attending a peaceful demonstration.

The Bar Council and BHRC are particularly concerned by [reports that several lawyers are being detained at undisclosed locations](#), including one lawyer who was arrested while representing their client in court.

[Reports indicate that law societies, bar associations and lawyers](#) have also faced threats of arrest and closure of their premises after issuing public statements calling on the Iranian authorities to respect due process, the right to legal representation, and fair trials.

The Iranian authorities appear to be breaching the [UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers](#). Principle 16 states “Governments shall ensure that lawyers are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference” and “shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognised professional duties, standards and services.” Principle 18 further provides that lawyers “shall not be identified with their clients or their clients' causes as a result of discharging their functions.”

The arrest of lawyers serves to impede the legal profession's ability to perform its vital function to act independently, jeopardises the right to legal representation, and increases the risk of impunity in relation to alleged human rights abuses committed by the State.

Detaining people because they exercised their right to freedom of assembly, denying access to legal representation, and threatening, arresting or detaining lawyers are all actions that are in clear breach of Iranian [domestic law](#) and the countries [obligations](#) under the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#).

The Bar Council and the BHRC call on the Islamic Republic of Iran to:

- Immediately release all lawyers detained for advising or representing clients, or potential clients, or for exercising their right to peaceful assembly, and/or without legal bases that are in compliance with Iran's international obligations.
- Protect, promote, and guarantee the rights of lawyers to carry out their professional duties independently and free from intimidation and arrest.
- Facilitate and uphold the right to legal advice and representation, and all associated fair trial and due process rights.