



OIAD ACTIVITY REPORT



Period
1 May 2025 – 30 April 2026



INTERNATIONAL OBSERVATORY
FOR LAWYERS AT RISK

25 | 26



OIAD'S MEMBERS

Active members: 45

Germany:

- » HAMM BAR ASSOCIATION
- » COLOGNE BAR ASSOCIATION

Belgium:

- » BRUSSELS BAR ASSOCIATION

Cameroon:

- » CAMEROON BAR ASSOCIATION

Spain:

- » SPANISH NATIONAL BAR COUNCIL (CGAE)
- » BARCELONA BAR ASSOCIATION
- » BIZKAIA BAR ASSOCIATION
- » MADRID BAR ASSOCIATION
- » TALAVERA BAR ASSOCIATION
- » PAMPLONA BAR ASSOCIATION

France:

- » FRENCH NATIONAL BAR CONCIL (CNB)
- » AIX-EN-PROVENCE BAR ASSOCIATION
- » GUYANA BAR ASSOCIATION
- » HAUTS-DE-SEINE BAR ASSOCIATION
- » LILLE BAR ASSOCIATION
- » LYON BAR ASSOCIATION
- » MARSEILLE BAR ASSOCIATION
- » NANTES BAR ASSOCIATION
- » NICE BAR ASSOCIATION
- » PARIS BAR ASSOCIATION
- » ROUEN BAR ASSOCIATION
- » STRASBOURG BAR ASSOCIATION
- » TOURS BAR ASSOCIATION

Mexico:

- » ILLUSTRIOUS AND NATIONAL
BAR ASSOCIATION OF MEXICO (INCAM)

Democratic Republic of the Congo:

- » LUALABA BAR ASSOCIATION

United Kingdom:

- » LAW SOCIETY OF ENGLAND AND WALES

Switzerland:

- » GENEVA BAR ASSOCIATION
- » NEUCHÂTEL BAR ASSOCIATION
- » VAUD BAR ASSOCIATION

Turkey:

- » DIYARBAKIR BAR ASSOCIATION
- » ISTANBUL BAR ASSOCIATION

Italy:

- » ITALIAN NATIONAL BAR COUNCIL (CNF)
- » BOLOGNA BAR ASSOCIATION
- » BRESCIA BAR ASSOCIATION
- » MESSINA BAR ASSOCIATION
- » MILANO BAR ASSOCIATION
- » MODENA BAR ASSOCIATION
- » MONZA BAR ASSOCIATION
- » PADUA BAR ASSOCIATION
- » PATTI BAR ASSOCIATION
- » ROME BAR ASSOCIATION
- » ROVERETO BAR ASSOCIATION
- » TORRE ANNUNZIATA BAR ASSOCIATION
- » TURIN BAR ASSOCIATION
- » VERONA BAR ASSOCIATION

Associate members: 22

- » EUROPEAN DEMOCRATIC LAWYERS
- » ASF FRANCE
- » CHINA HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYERS CONCERN GROUP
- » BELARUSIAN ASSOCIATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYERS (BAHRL)
- » CONFÉRENCE DES BÂTONNIERS
- » CCBE
- » DÉFENSE SANS FRONTIÈRES - AVOCATS SOLIDAIRES
- » ENDANGERED LAWYERS - AVVOCATI MINACCIATI
- » FNUJA
- » FRONLINE LAWYERS ASSOCIATION
- » IDHBP
- » LAWYERS FOR LAWYERS
- » SAF
- » UJA AIX-EN-PROVENCE
- » THE ARRESTED LAWYERS INITIATIVE
- » UNION DES JEUNES AVOCATS DE MARSEILLE
- » BERLINER ANWALTSVEREIN EV
- » ASSOCIATION DES JURISTES PROGRESSISTES (GENÈVE)
- » INTERNATIONAL UNION OF LAWYERS (UIA)
- » AFGHANISTAN INDEPENDENT BAR ASSOCIATION IN EXILE (AIBAE)
- » ASOCIACIÓN DE ABOGADAS Y ABOGADOS, JUECES Y FISCALES DE DERECHOS HUMANOS DE AMÉRICA LATINA Y EL CARIBE (AJUFIDH)
- » PAN AFRICAN LAWYERS UNION (PALU)

Partner members: 1

- » ASOCIACIÓN PRO DERECHOS HUMANOS DE ESPAÑA (APDHE)

EDITORIAL BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE OIAD



The Italian presidency of the Observatory was marked by a strengthening of the OIAD's activities and its international standing.

The escalation of armed conflicts and gross and unacceptable violations of international humanitarian law have strengthened our determination and commitment to lawyers at risk, as they carry out their work in complete independence, demanding respect for fundamental rights, fair trial and the rule of law.

In 2025/26, five new active members joined the OIAD, including the Istanbul Bar Association and the Law Society of England and Wales (United Kingdom). Furthermore, the Pan African Lawyers Union (PALU), which brings together the bar associations of African countries, became an associate member.

These prestigious new memberships demonstrate, beyond any doubt, the strengthening of the OIAD's concrete actions and its global visibility.

We have handled more than 60 cases involving colleagues unlawfully prosecuted for the practice of their profession in the Americas, Asia, Africa and even Europe.

We have provided initial support, including financial assistance, to 39 colleagues in danger, mainly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), but also in Rwanda, Bangladesh and Turkey.

Our observers took part in more than 15 trial observation missions, notably in Turkey and Tunisia, countries that are geographically very close to us and characterised by serious violations of freedom of expression and the right to a defence.

As part of its prospective missions, the OIAD took part in an international mission of legal experts to Guatemala, the final report of which was presented on 9 March 2026 in Guatemala City.

In terms of international mechanisms for the protection of fundamental rights, the OIAD continued its involvement in drafting alternative reports submitted to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). In this regard, a report was dedicated to the situation of lawyers in Rwanda.

The Observatory also contributed to the UPR interim report on the Philippines.

Two detailed reports were published on the situation in El Salvador and Iran.

In the near future, we must do everything in our power to encourage the ratification of the European Convention on the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer by those States that have already signed it.

I would like to thank the members of the Board and our Secretariat for their unfailing commitment, as well as all those who have contributed to the achievement of our objectives, and I wish the new presidency every success.

Rome,

Leonardo Arnau

President of the International Observatory for Lawyers at Risk (OIAD)

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SUMMARY REPORT – OIAD ACTIVITIES

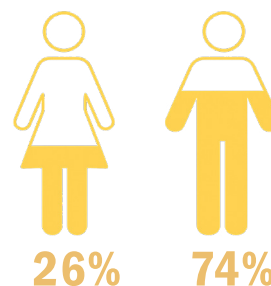
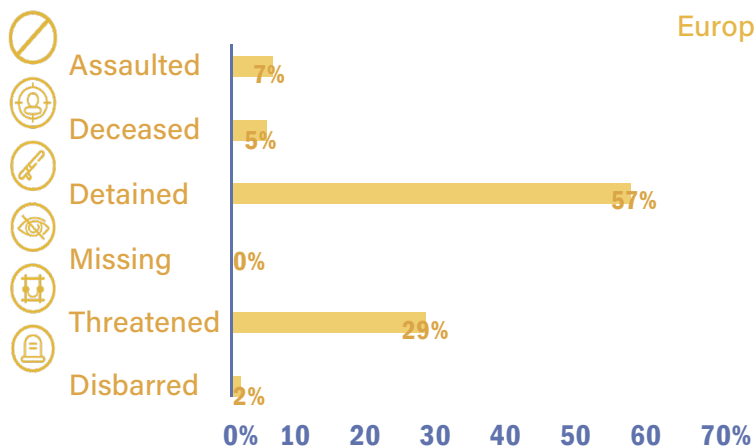
FOR THE 2025 – 2026 PERIOD

1. ALERTING AND RAISING AWARENESS

83 advocacy actions carried out in support of lawyers at risk



41 alerts



2. MONITOR, ANALYSE AND DOCUMENT

16 missions carried out in support of lawyers at risk

15
Judicial
observation
missions

1
Prospective
mission



Reporting and international contributions

As part of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR):

- 1** alternative report submitted » Rwanda
- 2** interim reports submitted » Guatemala
» Philippines
- 3** reports in preparation » Uganda
» Ukraine
» Venezuela

Other reports published:

- 3** country reports » El Salvador
» Iran
» United States
- 12** mission reports

3. SUPPORT AND STRENGTHEN

Financial support

€85,808 mobilised to support **40** lawyers at risk



Motives for aid:

resettlement, basic needs, administrative and legal

Legal support and capacity building



4. TRAINING AND PROMOTING AWARENESS

OIAD participation in 5 international advocacy and awareness-raising events

Distribution

5 Newsletters
2,972 recipients

Community

+363 LinkedIn followers
1,343 in total

New

Weekly summary of OIAD activities

Training

Course on safety and psychosocial risks

PRESENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL OBSERVATORY FOR LAWYERS AT RISK

The International Observatory for Lawyers at Risk (OIAD) is an initiative of the Conseil National des Barreaux (CNB – France), the Paris Bar Association (France), the Consejo General de la Abogacía Española (Spain) and the Consiglio Nazionale Forense (Italy).

Launched on 21 April 2016, the OIAD aims to defend lawyers threatened in the course of their professional duties and to highlight situations that undermine the rights of the defence.

The OIAD aims to establish itself within the landscape of protection mechanisms for lawyers in general and human rights lawyers in particular, by complementing existing mechanisms and working closely with existing networks.

By gathering as many bar associations and organisations as possible, the OIAD has become an essential, internationally recognised player in the defence of lawyers at risk.

The Observatory's methodology:

The Observatory continues to strengthen its capacity for action using internal guidelines on best practice designed to review information and specific requests, in order to ensure an optimal response to the needs of lawyers seeking visibility and support. These guidelines aim to facilitate the implementation of the OIAD's work at various stages, particularly with regard to:

Verification

1

- » The OIAD has a special status as a lawyer for the person at risk
- » The existence and occurrence of risk

Assessing the seriousness of the risk

2

According to criteria relating to the lawyer's situation: obstruction of professional practice, suspension of professional practice, physical and moral harm, death threats, detention, death penalty sentences, etc.

Use the resources available

3

Advocacy	Alerts	Missions	Judicial observation	Emergency aid	Financial assistance
	Recommendations		Investigations		Legal assistance

OIAD organisational chart

MANAGEMENT OF THE ASSOCIATION

BOARD

- » Role: manages the association
- » Composition:

FOUNDING MEMBERS



Paris Bar Association | France



Conseil National des Barreaux | France



Consejo General de la Abogacía Española | Spain



Consiglio Nazionale Forense | Italy

ROTATING MEMBERS (2024-2026)



Bologna Bar Association | Italy



Rouen Bar Association | France

- » Rotating annual presidency amongst the founding members
- » Monthly meetings

SECRETARIAT

- » Role: ensures the monitoring, coordination and day-to-day implementation of the OIAD's activities
- » Composition: 5 members of the Secretariat representing each founding member
- » 3 consultants
- » Weekly meetings

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- » Composition:
 - » Founding and active members (voting rights)
 - » Associate members and partners (advisory role)

Who are the members of the OIAD?

The OIAD currently has 45 active members, 22 associate members and 1 partner member.¹ During the 2025–2026 period, the OIAD was delighted to welcome 5 new active members, 1 new associate member and 1 new partner, who have joined us to strengthen the defence of our colleagues worldwide:



Istanbul Bar
Association | Turkey



Consiglio dell'Ordine degli Avvocati
Torre Annunziata
Bar Association | Italy



Vaud Bar
Association | Switzerland



Guyana Bar Association
| France



The Law Society
of England and Wales

Law Society of England and Wales
| United Kingdom



Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos
de España | Spain



Pan African Lawyers Union
Union Panafricaine des Avocats
União Pan-Africana dos Advogados
اتحاد المحامين الأفارقة

Pan African
Lawyers Union (PALU)

OTHER COLLABORATIONS

As part of its research and advocacy activities, the Observatory has renewed its informal partnership with the Aix Global Justice Human Rights Doctoral Clinic, which has enabled the OIAD to benefit from the Clinic's support in drafting the report submitted for Belarus's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in April 2025.

The Observatory has also strengthened its collaboration with its members through calls for experts, sent to support colleagues in danger with their legal proceedings.

¹ See page 2 for the full list of OIAD members.

PART 1. ADVOCACY AND CALLS TO ACTION

1. ALERTS, LETTERS AND PRESS RELEASES

The 2025 – 2026 period was marked by an increase in armed conflicts, greater use of violence and a rise in authoritarian abuses. In such an unstable environment, lawyers—as key actors in the defence of human rights and the rule of law—are increasingly targeted because of their profession and their commitments.

DURING THE 2025 – 2026 PERIOD, THE OBSERVATORY CARRIED OUT 83 ADVOCACY ACTIONS ON BEHALF OF 67 LAWYERS AT RISK

Emphasis was placed on the African and Asian contexts, where lawyers are increasingly facing pressure and intimidation, including arbitrary arrests and detentions, or the initiation of legal proceedings in retaliation for their professional activities.

Furthermore, the situation of the legal profession in Central America was also a major focus of attention during this period; the OIAD documented numerous cases of persecution in Guatemala and El Salvador. Meanwhile, particular attention was paid to the United States, the focus country for the 2026 World Day of the Endangered Lawyer, where many lawyers working in areas such as civil rights, migrant rights or sensitive legal disputes, face pressure, intimidation or threats directly linked to the practice of their profession, against a backdrop of growing political interference in the judiciary.

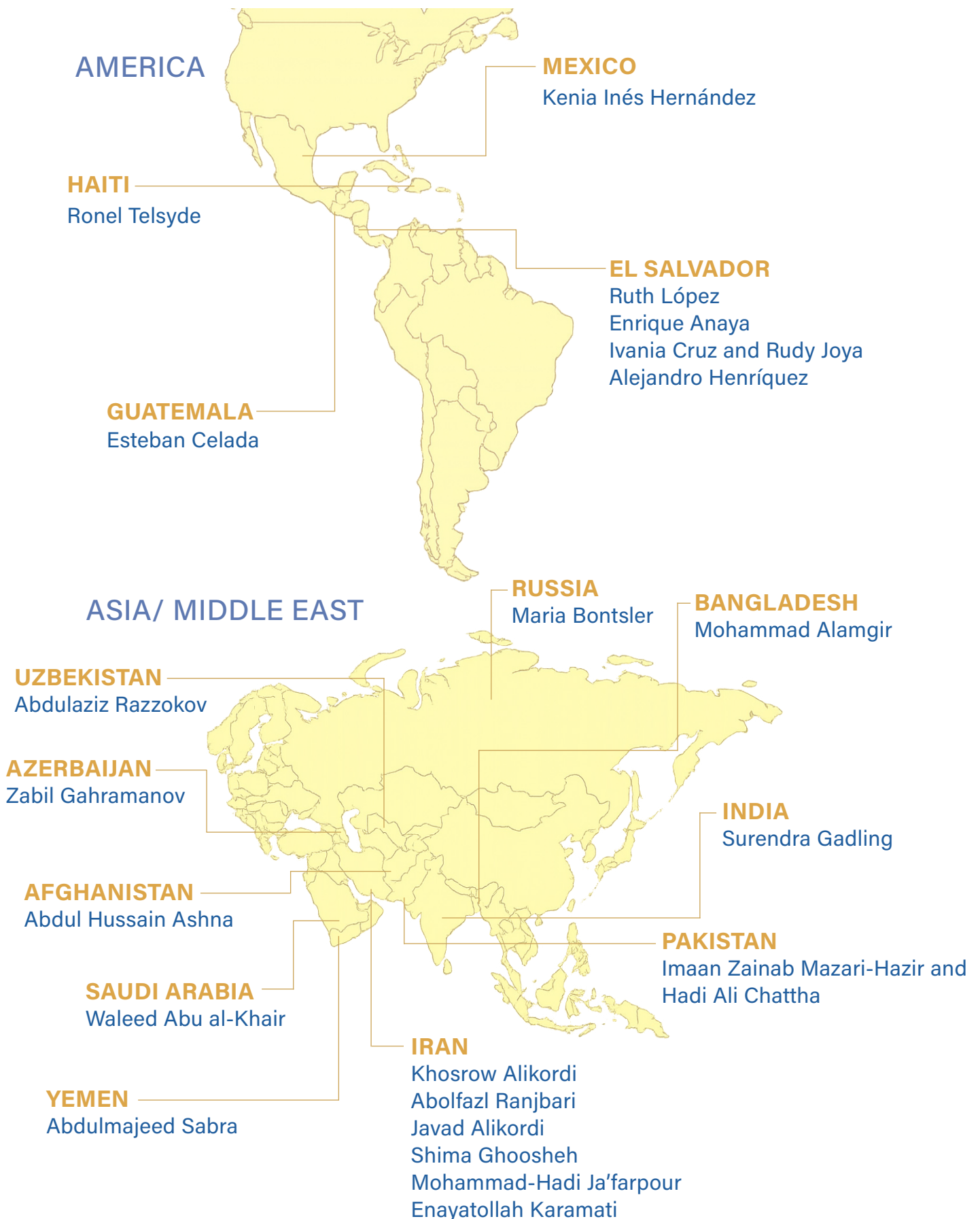
These trends reflect the global nature of the threat facing the legal profession and the need to continue advocating for its protection and independence, which are essential to the proper functioning of the rule of law.

Publicising cases is one of the main advocacy tools available to the OIAD. Depending on the level of risk faced by each lawyer, the OIAD communicates either publicly² or confidentially.³

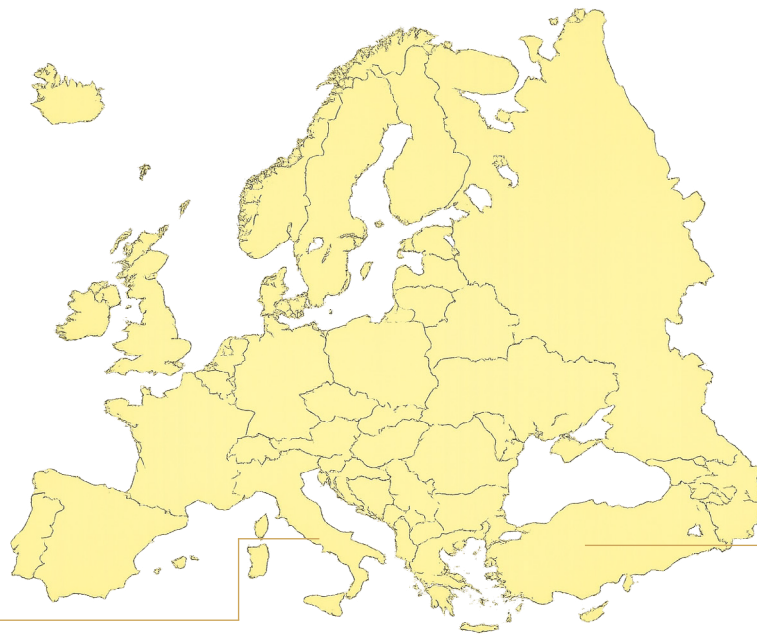
² The OIAD publishes its alerts and press releases and issues joint statements alongside partner organisations.

³ The OIAD supports colleagues under threat by writing directly to the relevant authorities via official correspondence.

2. MAP OF OIAD ALERTS ON THREATENED LAWYERS



EUROPE



ITALY
Alessandra Ballerini

TURKEY
Suna Bilgin

AFRICA

TUNISIA
Ahmed Souab
Sonia Dahmani
Ayachi Hammami

DRC
Médard Palankoy
Guillaume Muyembe
Olivier Fataki Lungwe, Christian Loseka
Mitamba, Eric Shejembe Ruhimbana,
Alphonse Eric Mushuka and
Augustin Rukakiza Mitambo

GUINEA
Mohamed Traoré

SUDAN
Aboubakr Mansour
Five lawyers in Khartoum
Rehab Mubarak

BURKINA FASO
Ini Benjamine Esther Doli

KENYA
Martin Mavenjina
Brian Kagoro

EQUATORIAL GUINEA
Gemma Jones

UGANDA
Abed Nasser Mudyobole

ANGOLA
Zola Ferreira Bambi

SOUTH AFRICA
Chinette Gallichan

PART 2. OBSERVING, ANALYSING AND DOCUMENTING

A second key area of work for the OIAD involves participating in judicial and prospective observation missions. Any participation by the OIAD in a mission is subject to approval by the Board. The terms of reference for the mission are then drawn up and included in a call for expressions of interest, sent to all our members in order to gather a team of observers.

During the 2025–2026 period, the OIAD has continued to support lawyers in Turkey and Tunisia against a backdrop of a steadily deteriorating rule of law and threats to the independence of the legal profession. The Observatory also conducted a field visit to Guatemala as part of a prospective mission aimed at assessing the current state of the legal profession and judicial independence. This immersion provided a concrete understanding of local realities and enabled the formulation of firm recommendations for the Guatemalan authorities.

Through its judicial observation and prospective missions, the OIAD has been able to continue documenting violations of the rights of the defence and reaffirm the importance of international solidarity with colleagues in danger around the world.

1. OBSERVATION MISSIONS

Trial observation missions are an essential tool for assessing compliance with procedural safeguards and the right to a fair trial. By ensuring an international presence at hearings, the OIAD helps to prevent violations, document breaches of the rights of the defence and raise the profile of high-risk situations.

In this context, the OIAD has launched, in partnership with Lawyers for Lawyers, a new initiative aimed at promoting the observation of hearings through local representatives. Mandated by the organisations, these observers enable more regular monitoring of proceedings, including in contexts where the deployment of international teams is difficult, whilst strengthening the local presence and responsiveness of monitoring activities.

TOTAL NUMBER OF MISSIONS **16**



TUNISIA

Sonia Dahmani, Ahmed Souab and Ahmed Nejib Chebbi

Having been heavily involved in defending the rights of lawyers and columnist [Sonia Dahmani](#), arrested in May 2024, the Observatory maintained an increased presence in Tunisia to demonstrate its support for the entire legal profession.



Through several judicial observation missions, the OIAD stepped in to support [Ahmed Souab](#), who was arrested on 21 April 2025 at his home in Tunis following a public statement in which he had criticised the conduct of the trial concerning the “conspiracy against state security”.

This campaign bore fruit and led to the conditional release of Sonia Dahmani and Ahmed Souab on 27 November 2025 and 23 February 2026 respectively.

It was also in connection with the so-called conspiracy case that the OIAD attended the hearing of Ahmed Nejib Chebbi, an 82-year-old honorary lawyer, who was sentenced to 12 years’ imprisonment in December 2025.

The situation remains a cause for concern, as Sonia Dahmani was again sentenced to 18 months’ imprisonment, to be served immediately, on 13 April 2026 in the “Racism II” case, illustrating the continuing pressure being exerted on lawyers in Tunisia.

A total of nine judicial observation missions were conducted between June 2025 and February 2026 in Tunisia.



[View the Tunisia alerts](#)

[See the mission reports](#)



TURKEY

President of the Istanbul Bar Association and Istanbul Bar Council

In the context of the prosecution of the Istanbul Bar Association (new member of the OIAD), the Observatory continued its judicial observation missions throughout the proceedings. In March 2025, President Ibrahim Kaboğlu and the members of the Istanbul Bar Council were impeached following a press release issued by the Bar. At the same time, criminal proceedings were brought against them.



These proceedings demonstrate the persistent pressure being exerted on the legal profession in Turkey and the attacks on freedom of expression and the independence of bar associations.

After several months of national and international campaigning, marked by concerns regarding respect for the rights of the defence and the fair conduct of the trial, this case has become emblematic of the fight for the rule of law.

The OIAD has expressed its unwavering support for the Istanbul Bar Association, which joined the Observatory in October 2025. In addition to observing all the hearings, the OIAD joined several other organisations in submitting an *amicus curiae* brief on 5 September 2025, demonstrating the legal fragility of the proceedings and their nature as reprisals linked to the exercise of the defendants' professional duties. These proceedings thus constitute a direct attack on the independence of the legal profession and on Turkey's international obligations regarding the protection of lawyers and bar associations.

In a ruling dated 9 January 2026, Bar President Kaboğlu and the members of the Bar Council were finally acquitted. This outcome represents a significant victory, made possible by the collective mobilisation of the legal profession and its supporters, although the case is still pending on appeal.



[View the latest mission report](#)

[Read the joint press release on *the amicus curiae*](#)

2. PROSPECTIVE FIELD MISSIONS



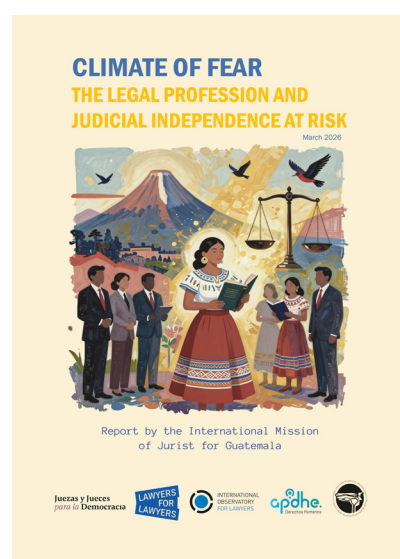
GUATEMALA

As part of its prospective missions, the OIAD co-organised an international mission of legal professionals to Guatemala with *Lawyers for Lawyers* to assess the situation of lawyers and judicial independence. Conducted in October 2025, this field mission enabled the collection of first-hand accounts and the documentation of the pressures exerted on legal professionals.

The observations gathered highlight the existence of worrying practices of harassment, criminalisation and persecution of lawyers and justice system actors, notably through the instrumentalisation of the criminal justice system. These dynamics are accompanied by stigmatisation campaigns and institutional pressure, targeting in particular professionals involved in the fight against corruption and serious human rights violations.



This mission thus documented a climate of fear that profoundly affects the practice of law in Guatemala, whilst highlighting the need for greater mobilisation, both nationally and internationally, to guarantee judicial independence and the effective protection of lawyers.



The information gathered during the mission was recorded in a report available in English and Spanish, which was presented in Guatemala on 9 March 2026, in the presence of representatives from the United Nations and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. This document serves as the basis for the implementation of numerous advocacy initiatives aimed at highlighting the situation of the legal profession in Guatemala.



View the mission report:
[“Climate of Fear: The Legal Profession and Judicial Independence at Risk”](#).



Recording of the report’s presentation available:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S53ex6--3Fk>

3. THE OIAD CONTINUES ITS WORK WITH THE UNITED NATIONS

As part of its participation in international mechanisms for the protection of fundamental rights, the OIAD has remained committed to drafting alternative reports submitted to **the Universal Periodic Review (UPR)**. In this context, a report was dedicated to the situation of lawyers in **Rwanda**, highlighting serious breaches of judicial independence and the practice of the profession. The OIAD's analyses were included in the [summary of stakeholders' submissions](#), particularly regarding the influence exerted by the executive branch over the courts, as well as the lack of independence of certain bodies, particularly the special courts.



The Observatory also contributed to the UPR interim reports on the **Philippines** and **Guatemala**. These advocacy efforts were enabled by research conducted following exploratory missions to both countries.

Similarly, the OIAD and with *Lawyers for Lawyers* co-submitted an ***amicus curiae* brief** to the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention in the case of Guatemalan lawyer Claudia González.

This submission aimed to provide an independent legal analysis of her detention and to place her case within the broader context of the criminalisation of lawyers in Guatemala. To date, the Working Group has not yet issued a ruling on this case.

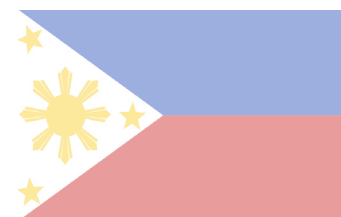
Guatemala UPR
Interim Report



Rwanda UPR Report



GTDA Amicus Brief -
Claudia González
(Guatemala)



Philippines UPR
Interim Report

Finally, the OIAD has strengthened its relations with the UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers by providing relevant and verified information on cases involving lawyers at risk, thereby helping to promote her work.

COUNTRY REPORTS

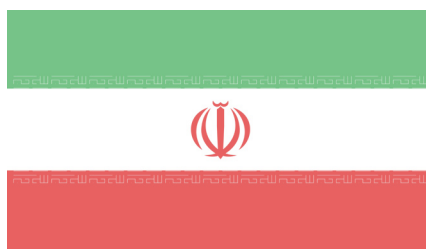
Two reports published during the period highlight structural attacks on the legal profession in national contexts marked by an erosion of the rule of law.

The OIAD's country report on El Salvador analyses the consequences of recent institutional reforms and the state of emergency on the practice of the profession. It highlights a weakening of procedural safeguards, breaches of professional secrecy, and growing pressure on lawyers, in a context where their role is increasingly being called into question.

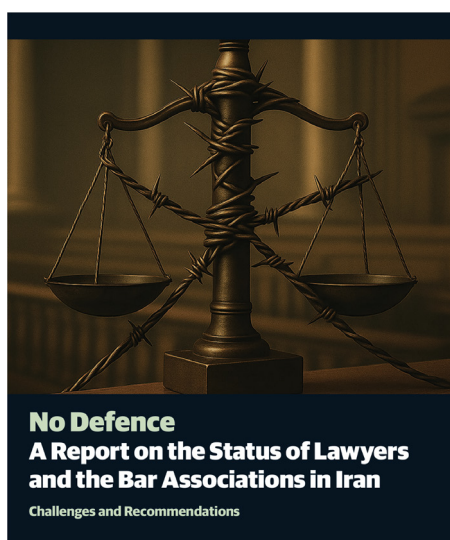
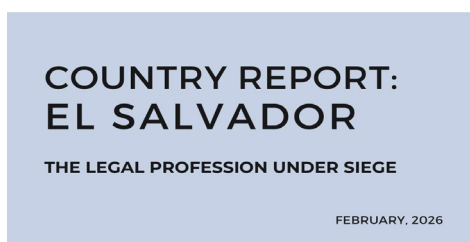
The report on Iran, entitled *"No defence"*, was produced by several international organisations, with the support of the OIAD. It paints a particularly worrying picture of the situation facing lawyers and bar associations, highlighting restrictions on access to the profession, breaches of the independence of bar associations, and prosecutions targeting lawyers, particularly those involved in the defence of fundamental rights.



Country report: El Salvador



Iran report: "No defence"



PART 3. SUPPORTING AND STRENGTHENING



Testimony from a Nicaraguan lawyer supported by the OIAD

"I am a lawyer in Nicaragua. Since 2018, I have been facing a high-risk situation, intimidation and constant harassment because of my work defending hundreds of political prisoners in Nicaragua. This situation is also due to the fact that, as a lawyer, I have represented many Nicaraguans who have denounced human rights violations, as guaranteed by the Constitution in force at the time, as well as for sharing information on social media regarding the serious human rights situation in my country.

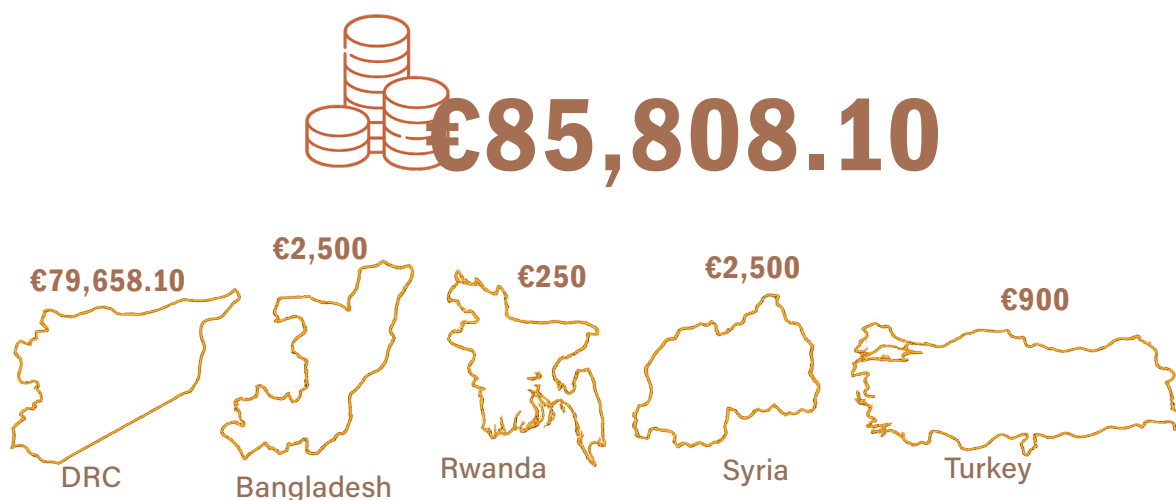
The OIAD has documented the surveillance, harassment and threats I have been subjected to as a result of my work as a human rights lawyer. Since I first became involved in this work, I have assisted and represented hundreds of Nicaraguan citizens in various parts of the country, notably by supporting people who have reported violations of their rights and by defending those who have been unjustly detained.

The OIAD provided me with direct support to ensure my survival, first in Nicaragua, where I was effectively facing a death sentence. Subsequently, in Costa Rica, the Observatory helped me cover my living expenses and coordinated with other organisations to cover the costs prior to my arrival in a third country. Ultimately, I felt greatly supported by the work of the OIAD and I would like to commend the constant and effective work carried out by its members."

1. FINANCIAL AID

Over the 2025–2026 period, the Observatory kept on supporting lawyers at risk by allocating a total of **€85,808.10** in financial aid, distributed amongst **37** beneficiaries from particularly vulnerable backgrounds. This aid was mainly granted to meet urgent needs related to relocation, covering essential expenses, or continuing professional activity under difficult conditions.

The geographical distribution of beneficiaries highlights a very clear predominance of lawyers from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), alongside more *ad hoc* support granted to lawyers from Bangladesh, Turkey and Rwanda.



Overall, this support reflects the OIAD’s commitment to ensuring the continuity of the legal profession and access to fundamental rights in high-risk environments. The majority of the aid was therefore allocated to lawyers in eastern DRC, as part of a special OIAD fund set up in May 2025 to respond to the crisis situation linked to the large-scale armed conflict in the eastern part of the country.

SPECIAL FUND FOR LAWYERS IN EASTERN DRC

In light of the continuing deterioration of the security situation in eastern DRC, with the significant advance of M23 forces from February 2025 onwards, lawyers have been exposed to particularly high risks. In several towns such as Bukavu and Goma, which fell into the hands of the armed group, mass escapes by prisoners convicted of serious crimes have contributed to creating a climate of impunity, putting at risk the lawyers who had defended their victims. In this context, practising as a lawyer amounts to exposing oneself to threats, reprisals and risks to one’s life.

To address this critical situation, the OIAD set up a special fund dedicated to supporting lawyers affected by these circumstances in May 2025. This *ad hoc* mechanism aimed to

provide a rapid and targeted response to the most urgent needs, particularly regarding relocation, subsistence and the continuation of professional activities.

Thanks to this fund, the OIAD was able to support 36 lawyers forced to flee the provinces of North and South Kivu, where their lives were in danger. Once this fund was exhausted, the Observatory continued its work by relying on partner organisations to ensure the continuity of support for lawyers who had not been able to benefit from it directly. This collaborative approach helped to strengthen the effectiveness and scope of the actions undertaken in the context of a prolonged crisis.



***Testimony from Honoré Imani,
lawyer from the Democratic Republic of the Congo***



"I had just been relocated by Agir ensemble pour les Droits humains (AEDH) to Uganda, after the cities of Goma and Bukavu fell into the hands of M23 rebels in early 2025. I had left my family in Bukavu in a state of extreme insecurity amidst a severe humanitarian crisis. I received financial assistance from the OIAD, which enabled me to spend three months improving my English skills, whilst ensuring financial support for myself and my family.

This assistance was a great source of support and resilience during a period of respite abroad. This support enabled me to enhance my physical safety and that of my family, but also to continue practising as a human rights lawyer whilst being relocated because, thanks to uninterrupted internet access, I was able to continue monitoring human rights violations as well as the risks of incidents that some of my fellow lawyers were facing locally in Kivu, particularly those who had handled sensitive cases prior to the outbreak of the rebellion."

2. LEGAL AID

Between 2025 and 2026, the OIAD was also able to count on increased support from its members in terms of legal assistance, to support lawyers under threat in such matters. The Observatory now issues **“Calls for Experts”** when a colleague in danger expresses a need for expert advice or support.

Alongside our colleague from Lyon, Pedro Andújar, the OIAD approached INTERPOL to request the withdrawal of the red notices targeting the Salvadoran lawyers **Ivania Cruz** and **Rudy Joya**. This request was accepted by INTERPOL, which removed the notices, noting that their issuance contravened Article 3 of its [statutes](#).⁴

The OIAD continues to issue **risk certificates** to lawyers (or, where appropriate, to forward them directly to the relevant authorities), in order to document their situation and facilitate the submission of visa applications to reach a safe country, and asylum applications in the countries to which they are resettled.

At the same time, as it is not its role to ensure the sustainable resettlement of applicants, the OIAD supports lawyers and directs them towards other support programmes, in order to offer them the solutions best suited to their situation.



⁴ Statutes of the O.I.P.C-Interpol, Article 3: *“It is strictly forbidden for the Organization to undertake any intervention or activities of a political, military, religious or racial character”.*

PART 4. TRAINING & RAISING AWARENESS

1. EVENTS

INTERNATIONAL FAIR TRIAL DAY 2025: TUNISIA

The OIAD helped organise [2025 International Fair Trial Day \(IFTD\)](#) held on 12 June 2025 at the Université Libre de Bruxelles and online, focusing on the worrying state of the rule of law in Tunisia.



International Fair Trial Day

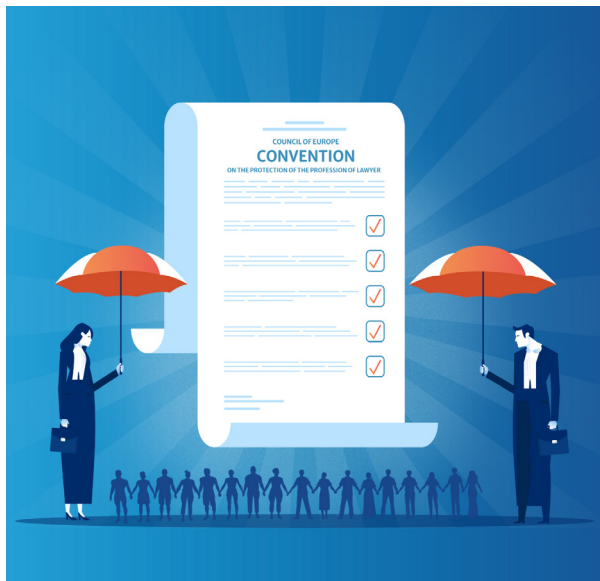
IFTD was established in 2021 by more than 100 legal associations across the world, to be observed every year on 14 June. It serves as an opportunity to raise awareness of the plight of those people and organisations in countries where fair trial principles are not being respected. The right to a fair trial has long been recognised by the international community as a fundamental human right. Without a fair trial, every individual risks becoming the victim of a miscarriage of justice, either as an innocent suspect wrongly convicted or as a victim unable to secure justice for a wrong perpetrated against them.



The event gathered experts to discuss the erosion of judicial independence, violations of the right to a fair trial and the growing obstacles to the practice of law. Against a backdrop marred by the executive's increasing control over the judiciary, the growing use of arbitrary detention and the harassment of legal professionals and civil society, discussions focused on strategies to combat impunity and avenues for redress at the international level.

[Read the report](#)

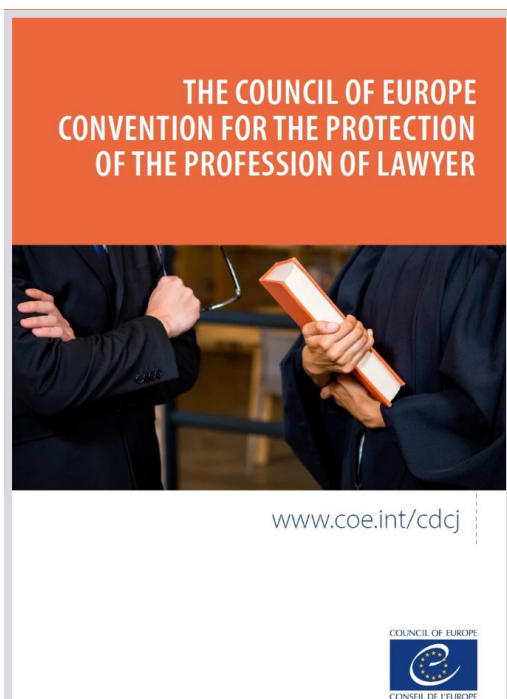
COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONVENTION ON THE PROTECTION OF LAWYERS



On 15 October 2025, Leonardo Arnau, President of the OIAD, spoke in Turin at the conference on the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Lawyers, organised to mark the opening of the 36th National Congress of Lawyers.

This convention is the first legally binding international treaty dedicated to the protection of lawyers. The OIAD actively followed the meetings of the Committee of Experts on the Protection of Lawyers (CJ-AV) in Strasbourg.

During the 36th National Congress of Lawyers, the President of the OIAD reiterated the fundamental role of lawyers in defending the rule of law and fundamental rights, highlighting that attacks on the profession are a worrying indicator of authoritarian tendencies within a state. He also emphasised the collective responsibility to guarantee the independence and free practice of the profession, which are essential conditions for the functioning of democratic societies.



[View the text of the Convention](http://www.coe.int/cdcj)

[Read the statement by OIAD President Leonardo Arnau](#)

2026 INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR LAWYERS IN DANGER UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



The 2026 edition of the International Day for Lawyers in Danger highlighted a worrying reality: attacks on the independence of the legal profession are not limited to authoritarian regimes.

This year, attention has focused on the United States, where a climate of increasing pressure is undermining the practice of law and, more broadly, the rule of law. As in previous years, the OIAD has provided its members with advocacy tools ([brochure](#), [mobilisation kit](#) and [poster](#)) to raise awareness and draw attention to these worrying developments.

FOCUS ON THE THREATS FACING LAWYERS IN THE UNITED STATES

- » Increasing incidents of online **intimidation and attacks targeting lawyers** defending political opponents, migrants or activists;
- » More than **50 lawyers prosecuted or sanctioned** in connection with their professional activities;
- » **Searches and seizures** of professional data as part of federal or local investigations;
- » **Political pressure** in cases of police violence;
- » **Threats of sanctions** against lawyers cooperating with the International Criminal Court.

This non-exhaustive list of threats reflects the growing climate of professional insecurity, in which the practice of law in the United States is increasingly being called into question. US lawyers now find themselves at the heart of political tensions. Their work can now lead to investigations, prosecutions or smear campaigns, particularly when they challenge the actions of public authorities or defend fundamental rights.

According to Marie-Aimée Peyron, Chair of the European and International Affairs Committee of the CNB,

“the situation in the United States is merely a symptom of a systemic crisis that is, on an international scale, disrupting the order and the law originally designed to preserve the rule of law”.



[Find OIAD's resources for the International Day for Lawyers in Danger](#)



CROSS-ATLANTIC MOBILIZATION IN SUPPORT OF LAWYERS AT RISK

Once again this year, several OIAD members have come together through complementary initiatives. The OIAD would like to thank all its members and partners for their support and commitment on the occasion of the 2026 International Day for Lawyers in Danger. Their support and their actions have helped to amplify the voice of the profession and strengthen international solidarity.

2. HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

OIAD AWARD 2025

Andrea Del Rocío Torres Bobadilla and Ibrahim Özden Kaboğlu, President of the Istanbul Bar Association and its Bar Council

The third edition of the OIAD Human Rights Award took place on 25 June 2025 at the headquarters of the Consejo General de la Abogacía Española, during the 2025 General Assembly. The 2025 OIAD Award was presented to the Colombian lawyer Andrea Del Rocío Torres Bobadilla and to the President of the Istanbul Bar Association, Ibrahim Özden Kaboğlu, along with his Bar Council.

Hosain Haydari, winner of the 2024 OIAD Award, presented the award to the 2025 winners and paid tribute to

“those who, with courage, integrity and determination, have held high the banner of justice and freedom”

Andrea Del Rocío Torres Bobadilla is a lawyer specialising in environmental and human rights defence, with over 16 years' experience as a practitioner, researcher and author on issues relating to the environment, the rights of nature, business, human rights and the right to development. For the lawyer, the communities she represents

“have taught [her] that spirituality is what unites us with nature. It is an inner power.”



Finally, the **President of the Istanbul Bar Association, Ibrahim Özden Kaboğlu**, received the award on behalf of the 67,000 lawyers who are members of the Istanbul Bar Association, a member of the OIAD since (2026). Mr Kaboğlu noted in particular that

“Bar Associations (...) have a duty to educate on constitutional matters. They must remind people that the State is not above the law (...) and that no power can exempt itself from legal scrutiny.”

In addition to the human rights award presented by the OIAD, the Observatory endeavours to identify specific cases where international recognition could have a positive impact. It therefore submits nominations for various human rights awards and, in the recent period, has submitted the following nominations:

SIR HENRY BROOKE AWARD 2026: RUTH LÓPEZ

nomination proposed by the OIAD



Salvadoran lawyer [Ruth López](#) has been awarded the 2026 Sir Henry Brooke Award, presented by the Alliance for Lawyers at Risk, in recognition of her commitment to the rule of law, the fight against corruption and access to justice in El Salvador. The OIAD supported and put forward her nomination for this award, commending her tireless work in documenting institutional abuses and her defence of sensitive human rights cases.

This distinction is of particular significance given that Ruth López has been detained since May 2025, as part of proceedings widely criticised for failing to respect fundamental safeguards. Her case has become emblematic of the risks faced by lawyers committed to defending the rule of law in contexts of authoritarian drift, sparking growing international mobilisation.

CCBE HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD 2026

joint nomination promoted by the OIAD

The founding members of the OIAD have joined forces to ensure that the Spanish, French and Italian delegations jointly nominate the **President of the Istanbul Bar Association, Ibrahim Özden Kaboğlu, and his Bar Council**, for the CCBE Human Rights Award 2026, in recognition of his struggle and his relentless defence of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

As a lawyer, constitutional expert, university professor and former Turkish politician, Mr Kaboğlu has distinguished himself in particular through his defence of minorities, notably the Kurdish minority, and his criticism of President Erdogan's repressive policies.



2025 EBRU TIMTIK PRIZE: AHMED SOUAB

The Ebru Timtik Award is named after the Turkish lawyer who died in August 2020 after 238 days on hunger strike in protest against violations of the right to a fair trial in her country. This prize is awarded annually on International Fair Trial Day (IFTD) to those who have demonstrated commitment and sacrifice in defending the right to a fair trial. The first Ebru Timtik Prize was awarded posthumously to Ebru Timtik herself.

In 2025, the prize was awarded to Tunisian lawyer **Ahmed Souab** for his commitment to the rule of law and fundamental freedoms in Tunisia. As a former magistrate and now a lawyer, he has stood out for his critical stance on attacks on the independence of the judiciary and his defence of the principles of fair trial. His career makes him an iconic figure in the defence of human rights and the legal profession in the country.



AHMED SOUAB

“a man whose entire career has been devoted to the fight for justice and the protection of human rights”

2025 Award Jury

2025 EBRU TIMTIK AWARDEE

3. TRAINING: OIAD’s second training workshop on safety and psychosocial risks

Following on from the training workshop on safety and psychosocial risks organised by the OIAD on 13 March 2025 in Madrid, a second session has been organised, online, in order to reach a wider audience of lawyers. This session has also been delivered by Arancha García del Soto, a social psychologist and PhD in sociology. It aims to continue the work already undertaken on the issues of “self-care” and collective support within the profession.

The workshop has focused in particular on the “do no harm” interview methodology with victims of human rights violations, emphasising attentive listening and the prevention of trauma re-experiencing. Practical tools for stress management, emotional self-regulation and teamwork have also been shared, with the aim of strengthening the resilience of lawyers facing difficult situations.

Through this second workshop, the OIAD reaffirms its growing interest in these issues and its commitment to sustaining its efforts to promote the mental health of legal professionals.

4. TRENGTHENING COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

The OIAD has developed its communication channels for its members and partners. The newsletter is now published quarterly and, in parallel, a new “weekly recap” format has been introduced to its members, who receive a summary email highlighting the Observatory’s main news, which is also shared on LinkedIn, every Monday.

SECOND OIAD TRAINING WORKSHOP ON SAFETY AND PSYCHOSOCIAL RISKS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENCE LAWYERS

Expert: Arancha García del Soto

[Session 1: training workshop on no harm interview techniques](#)

📅 19 May, 2026 at 11am (CET)
🔒 Registration required

[Session 2: workshop on strengthening individual and collective self-care](#)

📅 26 May, 2026 at 11am (CET)
🔒 Registration required

Online & English




**Observatory Quarterly
Newsletter**

