

## CCBE statement condemning stigmatisation of and threats to immigration lawyers

4 April 2025

The Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE) represents the Bars and Law Societies of 46 countries, and through them more than 1 million European lawyers.

With this statement, the Bars and Law Societies of Europe wish to condemn, with a united voice and in the strongest possible terms, the publication on 30 January 2025 by a French extreme-right magazine of a special issue targeting lawyers working in the field of immigration law, and the related publications on social media that followed.

The special issue in question contained a series of articles targeting lawyers, but also judges, NGOs, and journalists, designating them as “guilty of the immigration invasion”. A list of sixty lawyers, with their identity and the indication of the tribunal where they exercise, was part of the dossier. Lawyers are, amongst others, accused of benefitting from the backlog faced by administrative courts and using the law to “make France bend”. In addition, the articles contained false information regarding for instance the remuneration received by lawyers. The publication was followed by the circulation of posts and videos on social media, targeting some lawyers and showing their names and pictures.

Furthermore, these publications incited and propelled a series of extremely violent and intimidating comments and appeals of violence, including death threats, addressed to these lawyers and putting them and their families at risk. Several of them have been the victims of harassment since the publications.

Shocked by the unprecedented violence of these acts, the CCBE firmly states that they are unacceptable. They are reminiscent of the darkest times in European history.

This statement builds on [the letter](#) that the CCBE President has sent to the French authorities as a matter of urgency in order to convey its concerns regarding these publications and call on them to take any necessary measures to ensure the security of the lawyers targeted and the responsibility of the authors of these acts.

The CCBE members express their solidarity with the lawyers listed in the magazine and subsequently attacked and harassed, as well as with other categories of professions such as judges, and other persons targeted by the publication. Moreover, they welcome and express support for the actions of French Bars that reacted to this attack, such as the [press release by the Conseil national des barreaux](#) or by the Bars of Marseille and Bordeaux.

The CCBE also calls on the authorities of the Member States to unambiguously condemn any attacks of this kind if they happen, hoping however, that this will not be the case.

Although the gravity of the attack is unprecedented, unfortunately, this publication is not an isolated incident and it confirms an increased pressure and attacks on immigration lawyers

mostly from far-right groups, as mentioned in the CCBE statement of November 2024 regarding recent developments in the field of asylum.<sup>1</sup> For instance, incidents also occurred in Germany. After the knife attack in the German city of Solingen in August 2024, in which three people were killed, various media outlets, including German tabloid BILD, reported on the lawyer who had represented the suspected attacker in his asylum proceedings a year earlier. In a lurid manner, BILD depicted how the lawyer had allegedly helped to thwart the deportation. The lawyer was subsequently threatened on a massive scale and, among other things, a rally organised by the far-right Identitarian Movement was held in front of her office. Also in August 2024, in the United Kingdom, immigration lawyers reported being in fear of attack after their addresses were circulated on social media. They were told by the police to work from home, board up office windows and install fireproof letterboxes. This followed false rumours spread online that the perpetrator of a knife attack in the town of Southport had been carried out by an asylum seeker. Previously in June 2020 then UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson denigrated “lefty human rights lawyers” in a speech at the Conservative Party conference, comments that were roundly condemned by professional bodies.

Therefore, in this worrying context, the CCBE finds it important to recall some fundamental principles that seem to be forgotten or questioned more and more often.

- Lawyers, when representing their clients or assisting vulnerable, act as **essential actors of the justice system** and allow those who have rights to claim them. Therefore, the CCBE categorically rejects any insinuation or argument that by making appeals or acting in front of courts, lawyers abuse the law.
- The **right to an effective remedy and to a fair trial is a fundamental right** enshrined in Article 47 of the EU Charter. This provision also expressly states that legal aid shall be made available to those who lack sufficient resources in so far as such aid is necessary to ensure effective access to justice.
- **Migrants, whatever their status, have the right to ask for and be assisted by a lawyer.**
- According to the UN Basic Principles on the Roles of Lawyers: “2. Governments shall ensure that efficient procedures and responsive mechanisms for **effective and equal access to lawyers are provided for all persons within their territory and subject to their jurisdiction, without distinction of any kind**, such as discrimination based on race, colour, ethnic origin, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, economic or other status.”
- Both the CJEU and the ECtHR have recognised that **lawyers are assigned a fundamental role in a democratic society, that of defending litigants** (see for example ECtHR, 6 December 2012, *Michaud v. France*; CJEU, 26 September 2024, *Ordre des avocats du barreau de Luxembourg*, C-432/23, para 50.).
- **Moreover, lawyers shall not be identified with their clients or their clients' causes** as a result of performing their functions, as also stated in Principle 18 of the above-mentioned UN Basic Principles.
- **EU governments must ensure that lawyers are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference**, in line with Principle 16 of the aforementioned UN Basic Principles.

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<sup>1</sup> CCBE Statement on recent developments and upcoming EU actions in the field of asylum, 21 November 2024, [available here](#).

- In addition, it is the **duty of national authorities to safeguard lawyers adequately**, where their security is threatened as a result of discharging their functions, in line with Principle 17 of the UN Basic Principles.
- Finally, these kinds of situations demonstrate again the importance of the **Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer**<sup>2</sup> in strengthening the independence and security of lawyers. The CCBE calls therefore on all Member States to support the Convention and to take the necessary steps for its swift entry into force, underlining its significance in reaffirming the fundamental role of lawyers in upholding the Rule of Law and ensuring access to justice for all.

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<sup>2</sup> See Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer, adopted on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2025, [here](#). See also CCBE Explanatory note on The European Convention on the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer, 25 October 2024, [available here](#).