Press Release

CCBE Human Rights Award 2026 conferred to the former President and Board of the Istanbul Bar Association (2024-2026)

The Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE) decided to grant its Human Rights Award 2026 to the former President of the Istanbul Bar Association, İbrahim Kaboğlu, and the October 2024 to October 2026 members of the Board of Directors of the Istanbul Bar Association. The CCBE President, Roman Završek, will present the award during the CCBE Plenary Session on 19 November 2026 in Strasbourg.

The Award recognises their outstanding and sustained commitment to the defence of human rights, the rule of law and the independence of the legal profession in Turkey. Through this recognition, the CCBE pays tribute to their courage and determination in defending fundamental freedoms and the essential role of an independent legal profession.





About the Award winner: the former President and Board of the Istanbul Bar Association (2024-2026)

Under the chairmanship of İbrahim Kaboğlu, the Istanbul Bar Association issued a statement in December 2024 concerning the reported deaths of two journalists in northern Syria and the detention of journalists and lawyers during a peaceful assembly in Istanbul. The statement, grounded in international humanitarian law, was followed by civil proceedings seeking the removal of the Bar's elected leadership and criminal proceedings against İbrahim Kaboğlu and members of the Board. Despite these proceedings and the termination of the Board's mandate, they maintained that the defence of human rights and reactions to alleged violations could not be criminalised and fell within the legitimate mandate of the Bar Association.

Press Contact: Valeria Picchi • Communications Officer • +32 (0)2 234 65 10 • picchi@ccbe.eu

On 9 January 2026, İbrahim Kaboğlu and the members of the Board were unanimously acquitted (see pictures taken on this day on page 1, with the CCBE Chair of the Human Rights Committee, Barbara Porta). On 21 October 2026, the Istanbul Regional Court of Justice found the acquittal decision to be lawful and rejected the Public Prosecutor's appeal on the merits.

The CCBE President, **Roman Završek**, declared today:



"The CCBE honours the courage and commitment demonstrated by İbrahim Kaboğlu and the members of the Board. Their case has become emblematic of broader concerns regarding the independence of Bar Associations, freedom of expression, and the ability of lawyers and their professional organisations to fulfil their role in safeguarding the rule of law. With this Award, the CCBE reaffirms the fundamental principle that lawyers and their representative organisations must be able to fulfil their professional and institutional responsibilities independently and without intimidation or improper interference."

The purpose of the CCBE Human Rights Award

Since 2007, the CCBE Human Rights Award highlights the work of one or more lawyers or lawyers' organisations which have demonstrated outstanding commitment and sacrifice in upholding the fundamental values of the legal profession. It is granted to those who have brought honour to the legal profession by exemplifying the highest standards of professional and personal conduct in the field of human rights.