

United States Chosen as Focus Country for 2026 International Day of the Endangered Lawyer: Alarming Wave of Attacks on the Legal Profession Sparks Global Concern

Following today's meeting of the Coalition for the International Day of the Endangered Lawyer, the United States of America has been designated as the focus country for the 15th edition of the International Day of the Endangered Lawyer, to be held on 24 January 2026.

Since 2010, the International Day of the Endangered Lawyer has been observed annually on 24 January by the Coalition — a global network comprising more than 30 national and international bar associations, legal organizations, and human rights groups. The Day aims to highlight serious threats and systemic violations faced by lawyers in specific countries, and to call upon governments, international institutions, civil society, and the public to defend the independence of the legal profession and uphold the rule of law.

The proposal to designate the United States as focus country for 2026 was submitted by the European Criminal Bar Association (ECBA), in light of alarming developments affecting the legal profession throughout 2025. Among the key concerns identified are:

- **Executive orders** issued by the U.S. Administration in early 2025 targeting lawyers and law firms engaged in politically sensitive or pro bono cases, including the revocation of security clearances and restrictions on access to federal buildings.
- **Escalating harassment and threats** directed at lawyers, denounced publicly by the American Bar Association (ABA) as attempts to undermine the legal profession and judicial independence.
- **Discriminatory measures** interfering with law firms' internal governance, particularly with respect to diversity, equity and inclusion policies.
- **Political targeting of law firms and legal teams** involved in defending human rights, vulnerable communities, or conducting high-profile investigations.

By designating the United States, the Coalition emphasizes that even well-established legal systems are not immune to political interference and authoritarian tendencies. Lawyers must be able to carry out their professional duties independently and without fear of reprisals, in accordance with international standards such as the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers. Independent lawyers are necessary to protect democracy and the rule of law.

The Coalition will now proceed with the preparation of its comprehensive report on the situation, in close cooperation with local and international partners, to be released ahead of the 2026 International Day of the Endangered Lawyer.

The European Criminal Bar Association