Joint Statement of the International Legal Profession on the Protection of International Justice and the Integrity of International Law

20 October 2026

We, the undersigned Bars, Law Societies and representative organisations of the legal profession from across the world, reaffirm our commitment to the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary.

International law provides the foundation for peaceful relations between States, the protection of fundamental rights and the pursuit of accountability for serious violations of law. It establishes a framework within which disputes are resolved through agreed rules rather than through coercion or force. Its effectiveness and credibility depend not only upon the rules themselves, but upon the existence of independent institutions capable of interpreting and applying them.

International courts and tribunals are indispensable to that system.

The international legal profession is deeply concerned by any actions, measures or practices that seek to undermine the independence, authority or effective functioning of international courts and tribunals, or that target judges, prosecutors, lawyers and other legal professionals because of the performance of their professional functions. It should be recalled that legal texts adopted at the United Nations, inter alia, the Basic Principles on the Independence of the Judiciary (1985), the Guidelines on the Role of Prosecutors (1990) and the Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (1990), condemn those actions, measures or practices and call on states to protect judges, prosecutors and lawyers from them. International courts must be able to carry out their judicial functions independently, impartially and without intimidation or interference. Any measures directed against judicial institutions or individual members of the legal profession because of the exercise of their professional functions threaten not only those directly affected, but the integrity of international justice itself.

The protection of international justice is a shared responsibility.

States have a responsibility to respect the independence of international courts and tribunals, to comply in good faith with their international obligations, to cooperate with judicial institutions and to refrain from measures that obstruct their lawful functions.

International institutions have a responsibility to safeguard the independence and effective functioning of judicial bodies and to ensure that those who work within or alongside them can perform their functions without fear of retaliation or reprisal.

The legal profession has a responsibility to defend the independence of courts and lawyers and to ensure that those who represent, advise or appear before international courts and tribunals can perform their professional duties without fear of retaliation.

We therefore call upon States and international institutions to:

- respect and protect the independence, impartiality and effective functioning of international courts and tribunals;
- refrain from threats, intimidation, coercive measures or other forms of interference directed against judges, prosecutors, lawyers or court officials because of their professional functions;
- ensure that international courts and tribunals have the conditions that are necessary to perform their mandates independently and effectively;
- cooperate in good faith with international courts and tribunals and respect applicable international legal obligations; and
- ensure that international disputes and questions of legal responsibility are addressed through law and legitimate judicial and institutional processes.

The defence of international justice is ultimately a defence of a principle that transcends individual cases, institutions and political circumstances. At a time when the international rule of law is facing increasing pressure, the protection of international justice requires a clear and collective commitment to the principles on which it rests.

As representatives of the legal profession across jurisdictions and continents, we reaffirm our collective commitment to an international rule of law where courts are free to exercise their functions independently and judges and legal professionals can perform their duties without fear or interference.

List of signatories:

American Bar Association (ABA)

Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE)

International Bar Association (IBA)

Japan Federation of Bar Associations (JFBA)

Law Association for Asia and the Pacific (LAWASIA)

Pan African Lawyers Union (PALU)

Union Iberoamericana de Colegios y Agrupaciones de Abogados (UIBA)

International Association of Lawyers (UIA)