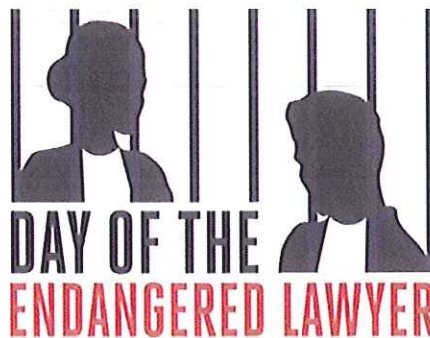




AVOCATS EUROPEENS DEMOCRATES
ADOCATU DEMOCRATA EUROPAEAE
EVROPATISCHI DEMOKRATISCHI RECHTANWALTER
ADVOCATI EUROPEI DEMOCRATICI
PROFESORES EUROPEOS DEMOCRATAS
AVVOCATI EUROPEI DEMOCRATICI
EVROPEJSI DEMOKRATISCHI ADVOKATIN
EUROPEAN DEMOCRATIC LAWYERS



ELDH European Association of Lawyers
for Democracy and World Human Rights

Day of the Endangered Lawyer – 22nd January 2016.

In solidarity with Honduran lawyers, judges and other law professionals

Since 2010 every year on or about 24 January protests are organized in front of embassies in solidarity with endangered lawyers, who are threatened, attacked, or even killed because they defend human rights, poor people, trade unionists or peasants or because they are just fulfilling their professional duties. The date commemorates of 4 lawyers and a trade unionist who were killed by Spanish fascists in Madrid in 1977.

On Friday, 22nd January 2016, lawyers, other law professionals and campaigners will be protesting outside Honduran Embassies and Consulates all over Europe and in countries outside Europe. A petition on behalf of the Honduran lawyers and other law professionals will be handed over to the Ambassadors.

The aim is to highlight the ongoing wave of violence directed at lawyers and other law professionals in Honduras. The situation facing lawyers in Honduras is dire. Between 2010 and March 2015 the Inter-American Human Rights Commission (IAHRC) recorded 91 deaths of lawyers as a result of targeted killings.

The violence does not concern only lawyers and other law professionals. Many Hondurans are suffering severe violations of human rights. These adversely affect public life in Honduras as a whole. The main reasons for this violence are poverty, unemployment, drug-trafficking, misogyny, and severe deficits in the investigation and prosecution of these crimes. The crimes of violence are not only committed by organized groups as has been declared by the Honduran Government but also often covered up by influential officials for reasons of corruption or complicity. Lawyers, prosecutors and judges who deal with cases of violence or state corruption run a high risk of becoming victims of violence themselves.

In addition to the organizational deficiencies of the prosecution, intimidation of witnesses, prosecutors, judges and lawyers as well their corruption are responsible for wide scale impunity for such crimes. The independence of judges is not guaranteed. On the contrary restrictive laws make it difficult for judges to keep their independence and to guarantee the functioning of the law. Judges who have protested against the coup d'état in 2009 were illegally dismissed, as has been confirmed by the Inter American Court of Human Rights in 2015. This state interference in the judicial system undermines the rule of law.

This situation has been reported by different United Nations mechanisms: UN Special Procedures, Human Rights Treaty Bodies, and the Human Rights Council. According to a study by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in 2013 Honduras had the highest homicide rate in the world. This is also confirmed by NGOs such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

Human Rights Watch in their annual report commented that:

“Honduras suffers from rampant crime and impunity for human rights abuses...Judges face acts of intimidation and political interference”

The IAHRRC received reports of assassinations and intimidation of judges in Honduras. The IACHR also received information about the assassination of Mireya Efigenia Mendoza Peña, a trial court judge in El Progreso, Yoro and Assistant Secretary of the Association of Judges for Democracy, an organization that works to defend judges in Honduras. According to publicly available information, in 2014 at least 20 judges have received death threats and according to information provided by the *Asociación Jueces por la Democracia* (Association of Judges for Democracy), at least three judges have been violently killed in the last two years.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders received information that prosecutors, particularly those working on human rights and environmental issues, had received death threats or even have been killed and that their situation had become especially precarious. Furthermore, prosecutors and judges working on cases in which the police had been involved in crimes were under political pressure from high-ranking authorities, including from within the office of the General Prosecutor.

Professor Bill Bowring, English barrister, the ELDH President and International Secretary of the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers, the ELDH Association in England, said:

"Lawyers, prosecutors and judges in Honduras should be allowed to perform their professional duties without any intimidation and adequate protection needs to be provided by the state especially when lives are at risk as a result of the exercise of their profession."

Florence de la Pradelle, a lawyer in Brussels and coordinator of the Commission "Défense de la Défense" of the European Democratic Lawyers EDL said *"I support this initiative to highlight not only the deteriorating human rights position in the state of Honduras but to highlight the attacks on lawyers and human rights defenders as a whole."*

For more information please contact the coordinators

- Thomas Schmidt, lawyer in Düsseldorf and ELDH Secretary General:
Phone: 0049 – 211 – 444 001, thomas.schmidt@eldh.eu
- Hans Gaasbeek, lawyer and Director of the Foundation for the DAY OF THE ENDANGERED LAWYER in Haarlem
Phone 0031 – 23 - 531 8657, Mobile 0031 – 65 - 2055043
hgaasbeek@gaasbeekengaasbeek.nl

THE DAY OF THE ENDANGERED LAWYER is an initiative of

The European Democratic Lawyers (EDL), www.aeud.org
The European Association of Lawyers for Democracy and Human Rights (ELDH), www.eldh.eu
The Foundation of the Day of the Endangered Lawyer

The initiative will be supported among others by

The Honduran Association of Judges for Democracy
The European Bar Human Rights Institute IDHAE
The Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe CCBE
Various Bar Associations
Lawyers for Lawyers (The Netherlands)
The International Association of Democratic Lawyers IADL
The International Association of People's Lawyers
The International Association of Lawyers UIA
The Colegio de abogados de Honduras