Day Of The Endangered Lawyer 2026
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Conclusions and Recommendations of the Report of the Coalition for the Day of the Endangered Lawyer, 2026

(See the full report)

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Speaking Notes: Check Against Delivery

The 2026 findings reported by the Coalition for the Day of the Endangered Lawyer have led to the conclusion that the United States administration is engaged in a sustained and coordinated campaign to undermine the rule of law both domestically and internationally.

The coalition's report documents direct political interference with the independence of lawyers and law firms, judges and judicial institutions, the Department of Justice, bar associations, and law schools. These pressures have been accompanied by defamatory smear campaigns by high-ranking officials against lawyers who represent clients who challenge the President or his administration, or judges who rule against their policies or practices. The result is a chilling climate in which lawyers are reluctant to take on politically sensitive cases, resulting in a deterioration of the right of access to independent legal representation for vulnerable persons.

Judges who rule against the executive are being defamed and subjected to politicized threats of impeachment. The immigration justice system has been targeted, with mass dismissals of immigration judges, courthouse raids, and chronic underfunding of immigration defense.

The US executive – at the highest level – is engaged in a persistent and systematic campaign against the independence and impartiality of US judges and lawyers with the aim of forcing the US legal system to implement the executive's political goals. Executive attacks on the independence of the legal system violate US obligations to uphold the fundamental rights to equality before the law and access to independent representation before independent and impartial judges.

These rights are guaranteed not only by the US Constitution but also by international law, including the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* – the ICCPR. This treaty has been ratified by 175 of the 193 UN member states, including the United States. The UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers elaborate on ICCPR principles, confirming that lawyers must never be identified with their clients' or their clients' causes, and requiring governments to protect lawyers from intimidation and harassment. The recently adopted European treaty on the protection of the legal profession, which will be open to countries around the world, provides evidence of a growing international consensus recognizing that protection of independence of lawyers must be recognized as binding at international law.

Our coalition comprises jurists from 53 lawyers' organizations representing lawyers from dozens of countries on several continents – North America, Europe, the Middle-East, Africa, and the Asia-Pacific region. We are firmly united in our alarm about attacks on the rule of law in the United States. These actions in the United States undercut the international rule of law by undermining longstanding

international law and multilateral treaty obligations, and setting dangerous examples for authoritarian governments in other countries.

We stand in solidarity with our American colleagues calling for prevention of further deterioration of the rule of law. We are calling for urgent and coordinated action. Our report makes 40 recommendations to all branches of US governments, bar associations, civil society organizations, law schools, international bodies, and the media. To summarize:

1. The US legislature must act urgently to ensure that laws protect lawyers, judges and independent institutions from intimidation and persecution.
2. The US executive must immediately halt its practice of bypassing laws with executive orders and public statements that undermine and target lawyers and judges. Sanctions that undermine the independence of the International Criminal Court must be lifted. The executive must resume cooperation with bar associations to foster independent judicial appointments, and with law schools to ensure independent legal education and research.
3. US Judges should continue to condemn any effort to undermine the independence and integrity of the judiciary and legal profession.
4. Domestic and international bar organizations, academics, and civil society organizations should intensify legal education on professional ethics, and form coalitions to publicly expose and condemn political interference and to support challenges to unlawful executive orders. International legal organizations should organize solidarity and research visits to US lawyers to collect and report data on pressures against the legal profession, conduct trial monitoring, and support lawyers at risk.
5. International organizations should continue to monitor and report on independence of US lawyers and judges, and urge US authorities to resume cooperation with the UN human rights bodies and mechanisms.

We have an urgent message for journalists. There is a compelling need for continued commitment to courageous – and deeper – investigative reporting about unlawful pressures on lawyers, prosecutors, and judges, including political interference in their work. We acknowledge that journalists themselves are facing increasing pressure in the United States. This itself shows the need to protect lawyers and judges so as to ensure fearless legal defence for persecuted journalists and media organizations.

The rule of law in the US is deeply intertwined with international justice. Our international coalition of lawyers stands in solidarity with our American colleagues. When our colleagues in other countries and their legal systems are at risk, silence and inaction amount to complicity. The future of the rule of law in the US and around the world depends on our collective action today.