STATEMENT · Legal Profession and Lawyers' Rights

Day of the Endangered Lawyer

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Dear Colleagues and Esteemed Members of the Press,

Today, on the Day of the Endangered Lawyer, dedicated to highlighting the challenges faced by lawyers—the defenders of justice and the rule of law—we draw attention to the oppression, threats, and human rights violations faced by our colleagues around the world. This year, we specifically emphasize our solidarity with endangered lawyers in Belarus and Turkey.

In Belarus, the pressures on lawyers, particularly those advocating for democracy and the rule of law, have intensified following protests that arose with entirely democratic demands. Lawyers have faced arbitrary revocation of their licenses, detentions, and threats simply for performing their professional duties. These measures have punished them for their efforts to uphold human rights and the rule of law. Attacks on the legal profession, a cornerstone of the judiciary, not only undermine judicial independence and erode the foundations of the rule of law but also jeopardize the fundamental rights and freedoms of the Belarusian people, with lawyers being among the primary targets.

In Turkey, the risks faced by lawyers while carrying out their professional duties have become a significant cause for concern, especially in recent years. Lawyers are often equated with their clients, subjected to investigations, and face arrests and detentions. The targeting of lawyers who defend the right to a fair trial obstructs public access to justice and damages judicial independence.

Particularly following the orchestrated coup attempt of July 15, which increasingly appears to have been engineered by political forces, a state of emergency was declared, resulting in the arrest and detention of approximately 2,000 lawyers. Those who remained were silenced through intimidation, facing threats of unlawful practices. Unfortunately, some lawyers have engaged in unethical practices by cooperating with law enforcement and judicial authorities, thereby encouraging or even pressuring their clients to become informants, which constitutes a serious breach of professional and legal standards.

Esteemed Members of the Press,

In an environment where lawyers cannot freely perform their duties, both the sense of justice and the rule of law are deeply wounded. In this context, we call for the protection of lawyers' rights, the assurance of their professional independence, and the immediate cessation of pressures against them, in compliance with national and international legal standards.

We reaffirm our solidarity with all endangered lawyers and urge the authorities in Belarus and Turkey to respect the principles of the rule of law and justice.

Lawyers cannot be silenced; justice cannot be obstructed!

> Video: https://youtu.be/pxcjiFhDR24?si=ReXpwgoDxD4O7VyD

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