



ODIHR Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

Next target: legal profession

Side event

12 September 2018, 1-3 pm

Hotel Bristol, Warsaw (see map attached)

The legal profession plays a crucial role in ensuring access to justice for all, transparency and accountability of the state, Rule of law and the respect for human rights. Yet, instead of being perceived as a vital player to the justice sector, today lawyers are often targeted by the governments in many OSCE countries for seeking truth and justice. As a result, lawyers often face high risks of persecution, harassment as well as severe sanctions for doing their job.

The most threatened lawyers are those who defend cases that would be considered “sensitive” in that respective country as. These "sensitive" cases vary from one country to another, but one can observe some constants: For example, the defense of journalists and bloggers, expropriations cases, defense of the human rights defenders, political opponents, trade unionists or defense of victims of torture by state authorities.

Lawyers may suffer direct physical retaliation measures such as kidnapping, imprisonment, psychiatric hospitalization, or assassination. There are also more subtle retaliation measures such as the use of disciplinary procedures with the permanent threat of follow-on effects. The ultimate weapon against an inconvenient lawyer is to make him/her an “ordinary” criminal prosecuted under dubious charges of tax evasion, corruption, drug possession, extortion, as these crimes allow heavy convictions. Increasingly, lawyers are becoming part of a highly targeted profession, and in numerous countries. This is particularly true in countries where bar associations are not independent or strong enough to play their role of protection of individual lawyers.

This side-event aims to specifically discuss the situation of lawyers in Belarus, Russia, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan. The discussion will extend to consider the latest developments related to the rights of lawyers and their independence in the respective countries, and what impact this has on the overall rule of law and human rights situation.



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Side-event Programme

Moderator: Jurate Guzeviciute, Programme Lawyer, International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute

Presentations and Discussions:

Independence of the legal profession and harassment of lawyers in Eastern Europe and Central Asia:

- Tajikistan: Dilrabo Samadova, lawyer, Tajikistan
- Azerbaijan: Nijat Mammadbayli, lawyer, Azerbaijan
- Kazakhstan: Snezhanna Kim, lawyer, Kazakhstan
- Russia: Róisín Pillay, Director of the Europe Regional Programme, International Commission of Jurists
- Belarus: Anne Souléliac, Head of the Human Rights section, Paris Bar Association

Organizers: Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Germany to the OSCE, Permanent Representation of France to the OSCE, International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, Paris Bar Association, International Commission of Jurists.

Location of the Hotel Bristol, Krakowskie Przedmieście 42/44, Warsaw 00-325, Poland:

