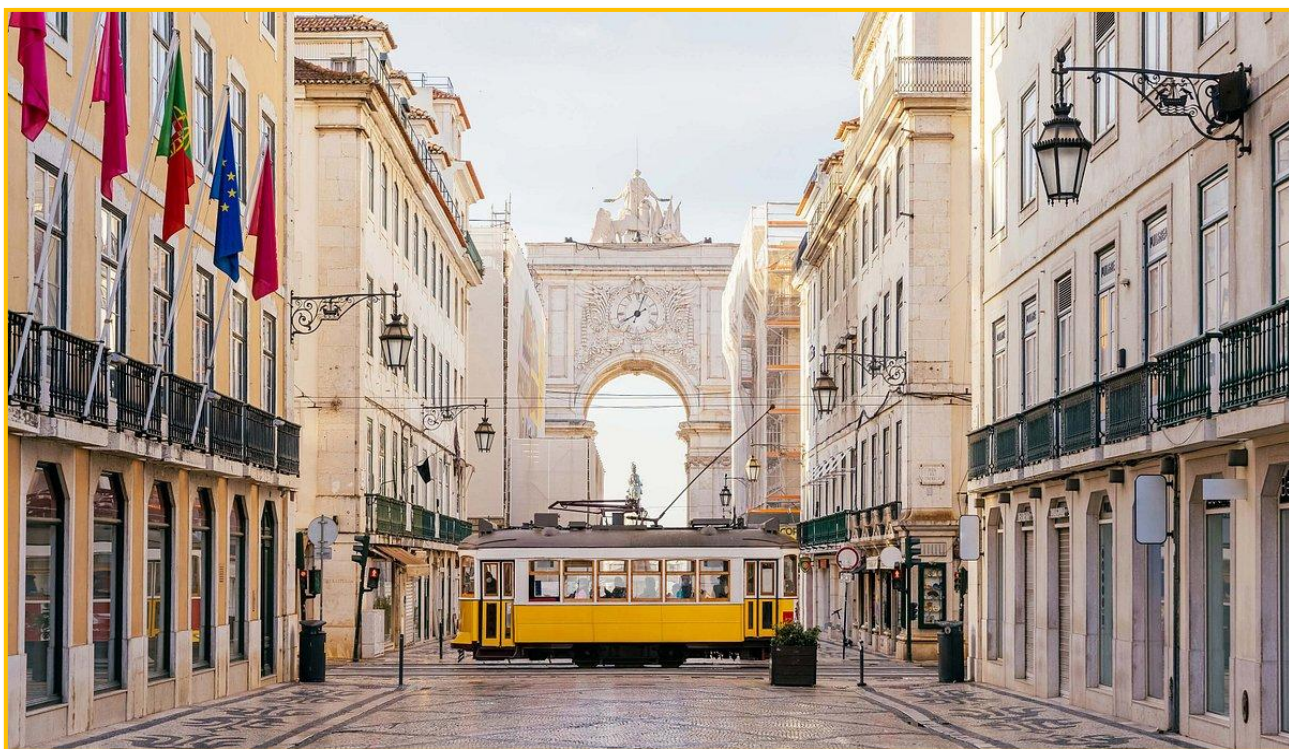




LOOKING AHEAD TO THE 68TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE IAJ IN LISBON



Dear Colleagues,

The first half of the current year has brought major and encouraging developments for our organisation, many of which will be reported in this newsletter.

I would like to begin with the splendid news of the proposal—formulated by a distinguished Norwegian political figure and member of that country's Parliament—to award the Nobel Peace Prize to the IAJ (together with the International Criminal Court), in recognition of the importance of the struggle that our organisation has pursued since as far back as 1953 to safeguard, throughout the world, the principle of judicial independence as a fundamental requirement of the rule of law. This development (regardless, of course, of the eventual outcome of the Prize's selection procedure) should also be viewed alongside another encouraging

initiative coming from Canada, where a bill aimed at proclaiming 11 January as a day dedicated to judicial independence—commemorating the now famous “March of the 1,000 Robes”, which took place in Warsaw on 11 January 2020 thanks to an initiative strongly supported by the IAJ—is progressing through the legislative process, and we hope will soon reach a successful conclusion.

Also of great significance is the outcome of the referendum held in Italy in March, in which a constitutional reform project seeking to undermine the independence of that country’s judiciary was overwhelmingly rejected by the people. This followed a referendum campaign in which the IAJ and the EAJ firmly supported the position of the Italian association, thereby demonstrating its international standing, in full continuity with the action of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, who promptly intervened in support of the positions of the Italian association, the IAJ and the EAJ. All this took place, moreover, in the context of the excellent relations that our organisation has long maintained with the Office currently held by Professor Margaret Satterthwaite, who will also be present in Lisbon to engage with the various IAJ member associations that will submit issues relating to their respective systems.

If these and many other developments fill our hearts with joy, I cannot conceal my concerns regarding a number of shadows that are beginning to weigh upon our associative life.

It suffices to mention, by way of example, that this year (and for the first time since 1995!) the African Regional Group has not been able to organise an in person meeting on the continent. Several invitations received by my Office—and some addressed directly to me personally—had, to our deep regret, to be declined, despite relating to international events of exceptional importance, due to the lack of adequate funds in our coffers to meet the increasingly substantial and pressing needs arising from a rapidly evolving international judicial landscape, compounded by persistent and accelerating inflation.

My repeated and urgent appeals to associations to propose concrete solutions—such as identifying international or national bodies capable of meeting the independence and impartiality requirements described in Article 10, Para. 6 of our Constitution—have so far received no response whatsoever. But that is not all. The above is compounded by circumstances such as the extreme difficulty and serious delays with which an ever-growing number of members pay the annual fees owed as members.

The current budgetary situation makes for us very difficult financing on site missions to assist associations facing difficulties in their relations with their respective state authorities, from participating in meetings of national associations to which we are invited as IAJ Secretariat-General and sometimes Presidency Committee officials, from funding rapporteurs’ visits for membership applications, and so forth. It is therefore my clear duty to state the very real risk that, if we continue along this path, the IAJ may—not yet, but in future—run the risk of finding itself in a position of closure and isolation at the global level. For this reason, I renew—yet again—my heartfelt appeal to all member associations not to underestimate this delicate subject.

I conclude with the hope that the October meeting in Lisbon will, as always, provide an opportunity for fruitful exchanges among all members and the various bodies that make up our great organisation.

Kind regards,



Giacomo Oberto
Secretary-General of the IAJ

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Welcome to Lisbon

The IAJ 2026 – The 68th Annual Meeting of the International Association of Judges will convene in Lisbon, Portugal, from 15 to 21 October 2026, bringing together leading members of the global judiciary to discuss pressing challenges and innovations in the administration of justice.



✦ Monument to the Discoveries



✦ Arco da Rua Augusta



✦ Torre de Belém



✦ Typical yellow tram of Lisbon

🏛️ IAJ Background

Founded in Salzburg in 1953, the IAJ has grown to include national associations from approximately 90 countries, making it the oldest and most prestigious international organization of judges. As a professional, non-political body, the IAJ promotes the rule of law and judicial independence while fostering exchange and mutual support among judges worldwide. Each year's Annual Meeting features plenary sessions, specialized commissions (constitutional, civil, criminal, and labor law), and cultural programmes designed to encourage dialogue, professional development, and collaboration across jurisdictions.



MEETING OF THE PRESIDENCY COMMITTEE IN ROME (June 2025)



On 19 and 20 June 2026, the IAJ Presidency Committee held its 2026 spring meeting at the premises of the Supreme Court of Cassation of Italy, in Rome. Among the various items on the agenda were the organisation of the next IAJ Annual Meeting and the international conference in Lisbon, the reform of the rules governing rapporteurs' missions, the selection of venues for the Annual Meetings in 2027 and the following years, prospective new members of the IAJ, the 2026 edition of the Judicial Independence Award, the IAJ budget, and the IAJ's relations with other NGOs and international organisations.

During the event, the Presidency Committee held a brief meeting with the President of the Italian Supreme Court of Cassation, Mr. Pasquale D'Ascola, in the historic *Aula Magna* of the Court, where the main official ceremonies of that jurisdiction take place. IAJ President Walter Barone presented President D'Ascola with the IAJ commemorative medal, marking the special relationship between the IAJ and the Italian judiciary, whose national association was one of the six founding organisations of the IAJ in 1953 and has provided the Secretaries-General and their deputies up to the present day.



MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF JUDGES – Luxembourg (May 2026)



On 21-23 May, 2026 the mid-year meeting of the European Association of Judges, European Regional Group of the IAJ, took place in Luxembourg with the attendance of the President of the IAJ Mr. Walter Barone, the First Vice-President and EAJ President Ms. Sabine Matejka, the IAJ Vice Presidents Mr. Roland Kempfle and Mrs. Dorota Zabłudowska, the IAJ Honorary Presidents Mr. Duro Sessa, Mr. Gerhard Reissner, Mr. Christophe Régnard, the IAJ Secretary-General Mr. Giacomo Oberto and the IAJ Deputy Secretaries-General Mr. Raffaele Gargiulo and Mr. Lucio Aschettino (and Mrs. Marzagalli on a voluntary base) In attendance were representatives of 39 European Member Associations of the IAJ (out of a total number of 44). The meeting was hosted by the Association of Judges of Luxembourg (*Groupement des Magistrats Luxembourgeois*).

The debates focused on several items of the agenda: among them, the situations of the judiciary in Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain and Turkey. EAJ President Matejka explained her report and the activities of the EAJ Board, whereas IAJ President Barone addressed the assembly, providing information on some IAJ member associations not belonging to the EAJ.

The assembly commemorated former EAJ and IAJ President Ernst Markel. The reports from the three permanent Working Groups of the EAJ were heard and discussed: the Working Group on the situation of Member Associations, the “Ways to Brussels” Working Group and the Working Group on “Judicial Salaries and Pensions”. The assembly greeted as well 3 special guests, namely the Deputy Director of ERA (European Academy of Law), the President of ENCJ (European Network of Councils of Justice) and Secretary-General of EJTN (European Justice Training Network), who made presentations on behalf of their institutions.

The event was preceded by an official opening ceremony at the Court of Justice of the European Union, on 21 May. On that same day, the IAJ President, the EAJ Board and the IAJ Secretary-General were received by HRH the Grand Duke of Luxembourg Guillaume V at the Palais Grand-Ducal of Luxembourg.

On 22 May, the European assembly adopted the following resolution on:

- [Greece](#)
- [Lithuania](#)
- [Poland](#)

MEETING OF THE ANAO REGIONAL GROUP – Online (May 2026)



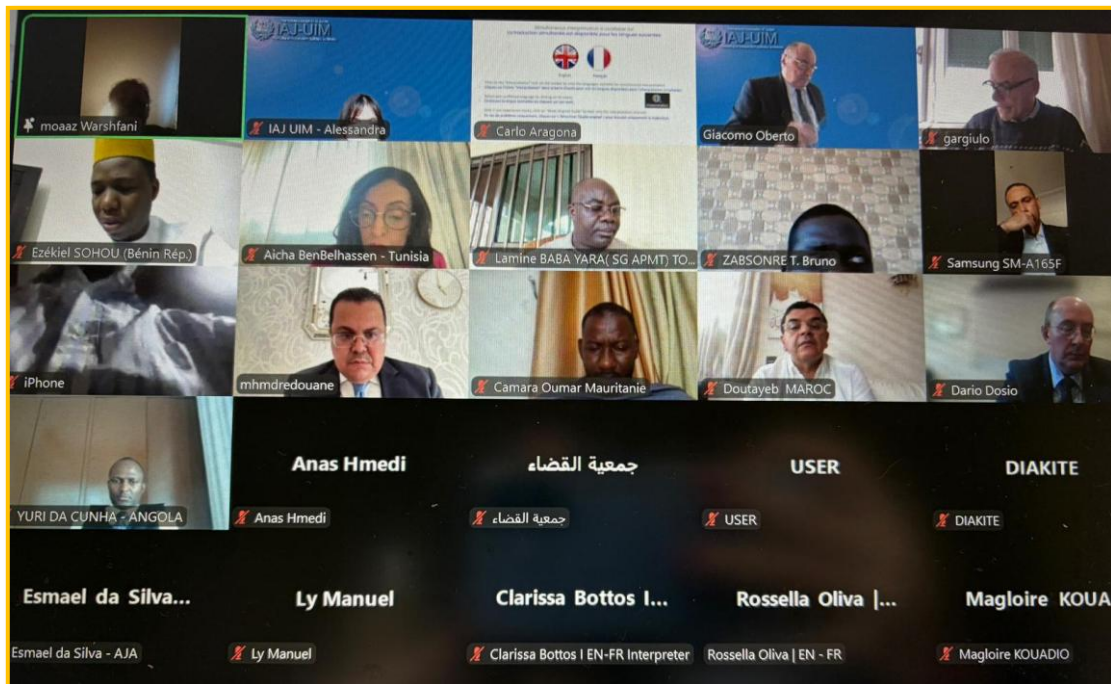
On 9th May 2026 the mid-year meeting of the Asian, North American and Oceanian (ANAO) Group of the IAJ took place online, under the Presidency of IAJ Vice-President and ANAO Group President, Mr. Clayton Conlan.

In attendance were IAJ President Mr. Walter Barone, IAJ Secretary-General Mr. Giacomo Oberto and representatives of following ANAO member associations: Australia, Bermuda, Canada, Mongolia, Philippines, Puerto Rico, Rep. of China (Taiwan), United States of America.

Among the subjects dealt with during the meeting, we may mention presentations on “The Judicial Role in Civic Education — What Can We Do?” in the framework of the Education Program, led by the Education Committee (William Goodridge, Cynthia Rufe and Tsogt Tsend).

Other topics on the agenda were: – Brief updates from each member associations, updates on behalf of the Presidency Committee and other business as the venue of next meeting, budgetary issues and applications for membership.

MEETING OF THE AFRICAN REGIONAL GROUP – Online (April 2026)



On 18 April 2026 the mid-year meeting of the African Group of the IAJ took place online, under the Presidency of IAJ Vice-President and African Group President, Mr. Mohamed Redouane. During the meeting different issues were dealt with concerning the life and the organisation of the Group. In particular, delegates from member associations referred about the situation of judicial independence in their respective countries.

IAJ Secretary-General Giacomo Oberto informed as well the assembly on IAJ budgetary issues. In particular the discussion focused on some countries which owe arrears in the payment of annual membership fees. Out of the African Group, one association in particular is risking to lose its membership in Lisbon, should its arrears not be settled before the meeting in Lisbon. President Redouane assured he would contact concerned association.

Also the issue of the venue of the next infra-annual meeting in 2027 was discussed. President Redouane will further contact member association on this issue and try to find a solution, as the 2026 infra-annual meeting of the African Group was the first of its kind to be held not in presence since the creation of the Group in 1993.

MEETING OF THE IBERO-AMERICAN GROUP – Santo Domingo (May 2026)



On 7-10 April 2026 the mid-year meeting of the Ibero-American (IBA) Group of the IAJ took place in Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic), under the Presidency of IAJ Vice-President and IBA Group President, Ms. Adriana Orocú Chavarría. The meeting was held together with the 73rd *Asamblea* of FLAM (*Federación Latinoamericana de Magistrados*), currently presided over by our Argentinean colleague Marcelo Luis Gallo Tagle. During the meeting different issues were dealt with concerning the life and the organisation of the Group. In particular, delegates from member associations referred about the situation of judicial independence in their respective countries. A visit of the Supreme Court of Justice was also organised during the meeting.

IAJ Deputy Secretary-General and Treasurer Galileo D'Agostino informed as well the assembly on IAJ budgetary issues. Following the meeting, the President of the Group issued from San José (Costa Rica) an official declaration on behalf of the Group, expressing its strongest condemnation of the actions undertaken by the National Council of Justice of the Republic of Peru in the evaluation and ratification process of Judge Oswaldo Ordóñez Alcántara, President of the National Association of Magistrates of that country.

The declaration is available under the following URL: <https://www.iaj-uim.org/iuw/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/OFFICIAL-STATEMENT-IBA-UIM-OSVALDO-ORDONEZ-PERU.pdf>.

RECENT ACTIVITIES AND INITIATIVES OF THE IAJ AND REGIONAL GROUPS



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF JUDGES

IAJ President letter on Tunisia

On January 7th, Mr. Walter Barone, President of the International Association of Judges (IAJ), drafted a letter concerning the situation of the judiciary in Tunisia and the proceedings brought against the President of the Tunisian Magistrates' Association, Judge Anas Hmedi.

The letter was sent to the President of the Republic of Tunisia; the President of the Government of Tunisia; the Ministry of Justice of Tunisia and the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers.

[Letter in French](#)

Letter of the IAJ Presidency Committee to Israeli authorities

On Sunday 25 of January, the Presidency Committee of the IAJ, following a request of the Israeli association of judges, issued an important letter expressing profound concerns about the independence of the judiciary of Israel.

The letter was addressed to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice, as well as to the Knesset (Speaker and Chair).

[Letter](#)

IAJ Presidency Committee statement on Ukraine

On 23 January 2026, the IAJ Presidency Committee issued a statement on the Ukraine Draft Law No. 13165-2 on "*Amendments to the 'Law on the Judiciary and the Status of Judges' and Certain Laws of Ukraine on Improving Declarations of Integrity of Judges and Judges' Family Relations*".

[Statement](#)

On 19 February 2026, the IAJ Presidency Committee received a letter of gratitude from the President of the Association of Judges of Ukraine: letter in [English](#) and [French](#).

The International Association of Judges Nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize

On 9 February 2026, the International Association of Judges (IAJ) received the news that it had been nominated for the 2026 Nobel Peace Prize. The nomination was submitted to the Nobel Prize Committee by Mr. Even H. Eriksen, Member of the Norwegian Parliament. It recognizes the essential role of judicial independence in upholding democracy, the rule of law, and human rights, and highlights the IAJ's longstanding commitment to these values worldwide.

[Letter to IAJ](#)

[Mr. Eriksen's Article on the Nobel Peace Prize nomination](#)



IAJ Statement on the criminal proceedings against Anas Hmedi (Tunisia)

On 17 March 2026, the International Association of Judges issue a statement. The IAJ expresses serious concern over the ongoing criminal proceedings against Anas Hmedi, President of the Tunisian Judges' Association (AMT) and stresses that leaders of judicial associations must be able to perform their representative duties without intimidation, retaliation, or criminal prosecution.

[Statement in English](#)

[Statement in French](#)

IAJ Statement on the criminal process against judge Hmedi (Tunisia)

On 1st April 2026, the International Association of Judges issued a statement. The IAJ expresses its deep concern regarding the criminal proceedings against Judge Anas Hmedi, President of the Tunisian Judges Association, in view of the hearing scheduled for 2 April 2026.

Statement in [English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#).

Statement in support of judge Anas Hmedi (Tunisia), following his criminal conviction

On 7 April 2026, the International Association of Judges issued a statement. The IAJ condemned the one-year sentence imposed on Tunisian judge Anas Hmedi, President of the Tunisian Judges Association.

The organisation expressed full support for Mr. Hmedi, denounced serious rule-of-law violations in Tunisia, and urge authorities to end any retaliation against judges and safeguard judicial independence.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, Professor Satterthwaite, also expressed her disappointment in a recent [post](#).

[Statement](#)

IAJ Statement on the aggressions suffered by a Costa Rican Judge

On 19 April 2026, the International Association of Judges (IAJ) issued a statement on the aggressions suffered by a Costa Rican Judge due to the content of her Judicial decisions.

[English](#)

[Spanish](#)

Statement in Support of Judge Anas Hmedi – Tunisia, following the decision by the Appellate Court

The **International Association of Judges (IAJ/UIM)** has been informed that the **one-year prison sentence** imposed on our colleague, **Judge Anas Hmedi**, President of the Tunisian Judges Association, was upheld by the Court of Appeal of Tunis on 1 July 2026, with immediate enforcement.

The Association reiterates its profound concern that this decision was reached in proceedings that have consistently failed to comply with the fundamental guarantees of due process and a fair trial, thereby further undermining judicial independence and the rule of law in Tunisia.

[Statement in English](#)

[Statement in French](#)



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF JUDGES

Italian Constitutional Referendum on the Judiciary Rejects the Government's Anti-Judge Reform

A constitutional referendum on the reform of the judicial system was held in Italy on 22 and 23 March 2026. Its purpose was to amend the part of the Constitution of the Italian Republic concerning the Judiciary. Voters were asked whether they approved a constitutional law that would modify the Constitution in several respects, most notably by introducing the constitutional separation of career paths between judges and public prosecutors, dividing the High Council of the Judiciary (CSM) into two distinct bodies, selecting their members by sortition rather than by traditional election, and establishing a so-called "High Disciplinary Court" to oversee disciplinary proceedings (instead of the currently existing Disciplinary Section of the CSM).

Both the Central Council of the IAJ and the General Assembly of the EAJ issued, over the past months, several highly critical assessments of the proposed reform. On 23 October 2025, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, Prof. Margaret Satterthwaite, addressed a letter to the Italian

Government concerning the proposed constitutional amendments on the separation of the careers of judges and prosecutors.

All related documents are available under the following URL:

[News on the Constitutional Referendum in Italy](#)

Audience of the Grand Duke of Luxembourg



On Thursday 21st of May, on the occasion of the annual spring meeting of the European Association of Judges (EAJ), H. R. H. the Grand Duke of Luxembourg Guillaume V. received a delegation composed by IAJ President Walter Barone, IAJ First Vice President and EAJ President Sabine Matejka, IAJ and EAJ Vice Presidents Roland Kempfle and Dorota Zabłudowska, IAJ Secretary General Giacomo Oberto, and, as representatives of the *Groupe des Magistrats Luxembourgeois* (GML), its President Philippe Wadlé, Vice President Danielle Poletti, as well as members of the board Jessica Schneider and Jeanne-Marie Kappweiler, and its former President Georges Everling.

During the audience, various topics of the engagement of the EAJ in defending the rule of law and the challenges judges face in Europe were discussed.

Webinar – building bridges between judges and society

On 11 May 2026 the European Association of Judges (EAJ) held a webinar on communication with society – now available online.

Our guest speaker was Dr. Konrad Maj, social psychologist, Head of the HumanTech Center at SWPS University in Warsaw, and lecturer at the National School of Judiciary and Public Prosecution.

Since 2016, Dr. Maj has been collaborating with the Association of Polish Judges “Iustitia” on strategies for public image building, social communication, and social research. He is also the author of several publications on innovative forms of legal education.

During the webinar, Dr. Maj addressed key topics such as:

- how to build meaningful relationships with society,
- how to foster public trust,
- and how to engage judges in activities supporting the rule of law and human rights.

[Video of the webinar.](#)

Resolutions adopted during the EAJ meeting in Luxembourg

On 22 May 2026, during its meeting in Luxembourg, the European Association of Judges (EAJ), adopted the following resolution on:

[Greece](#)

[Lithuania](#)

[Poland](#)

Joint Statement by EAJ, AEAJ, MEDEL and Judges for Judges – 10 years of Destruction of Judicial Independence and Democratic Governance in Türkiye

Ten years after the events of 15 July 2016, Türkiye presents one of the clearest contemporary examples of how the destruction of judicial independence can lead to the erosion of democratic governance, fundamental rights, and the rule of law. What occurred after 2016 was not a temporary state response to an exceptional security crisis. It became a systematic transformation of the judiciary and, ultimately, of the constitutional order itself. More than 4,500 judges and prosecutors were dismissed through collective measures lacking individualized evidence and effective judicial safeguards. Thousands were detained, prosecuted, or forced into exile. The purge of the judiciary was accompanied by a structural reconfiguration of judicial governance.

What is at stake is far more than the independence of a single institution. An independent judiciary is the mechanism through which democratic choices, constitutional guarantees, and fundamental rights are protected. Once courts cease to operate independently, elections alone cannot preserve democracy. Rights exist only on paper, constitutional limitations lose practical significance, and law becomes an instrument for exercising power rather than constraining it.

We therefore call for:

- the immediate and full implementation of all judgments of the European Court of Human Rights;
- effective remedies for dismissed judges and prosecutors, including reinstatement wherever possible;
- the release of individuals detained in violation of fundamental rights and binding judicial decisions;
- the restoration of an independent and politically impartial system of judicial governance;
- the re-establishment of merit-based judicial recruitment and promotion;
- concrete action by European institutions against persistent non-compliance with fundamental rule-of-law obligations.

[Full Statement here](#)



IBEROAMERICAN GROUP

IBA statement on Oswaldo Ordóñez Alcántara – Peru

On 17 April 2026, in light of recent concerns regarding the evaluation and ratification process of Judge Oswaldo Ordóñez Alcántara in the Republic of Peru, the Ibero-American Group of the International Association of Judges, issued a statement in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

IBA Statement on the assassination of judge Víctor Hugo Claire Hinojosa (Bolivia)

On 3rd of May 2026, the Ibero-American Group (IBA), Regional Group of the International Association of Judges (IAJ), expresses its firmest repudiation and deep institutional concern over the assassination of judge Víctor Hugo Claire Hinojosa, a member of the Agro-Environmental Tribunal of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, which took place in the city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra.

[Statement \(English\)](#)

[Statement \(Spanish\)](#)



AFRICAN GROUP

Statement in support of judge Anas Hmedi

On 7 April 2026, the African Group of the International Association of Judges issued a statement.

The organisation expressed full support for Mr. Hmedi, denounced serious rule-of-law violations in Tunisia, and urge authorities to end any retaliation against judges and safeguard judicial independence.

Statement in [English](#) and [French](#)



RECENT ACTIVITIES AND CO-OPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL BODIES

1000 Robes Webinar

On 11 January 2020 thousands of judges, prosecutors and lawyers from Poland and more than 20 European countries, accompanied by citizens marched the street of Warsaw in defence of judicial independence. This march has never stopped and is more needed than ever in many countries and regions of the world.

Therefore, on 12 January 2026, the International Association of Judges commemorated this event with a webinar ([programme](#)).

Colleagues from all four IAJ regional groups shared stories about the defence of judicial independence. We wanted to remind, that judicial independence is not a privilege of the judges. It is the basic human right of each and every citizen all around the world.

[Speech of the EAJ President, Ms. Sabine Matejka](#)

[Video of the webinar.](#)

January 11 – Day of Judicial Independence



The 6th anniversary of the 1000 Robes March was commemorated in a special event at the European Parliament in Brussels on 14 January 2026.

Polish Members of the European Parliament (Kamila Gasiuk-Pihowicz and Michał Wawrykiewicz) organised a screening of the film “Thousand Robes” (by K. Lisowski and I. Harris). The following panel discussion, moderated by Vice President Dorota Zabłudowska, focused on the story of the march and the future challenges in Poland and Europe.

High-ranking representatives discussed the topic on the podium: Polish Minister of Justice Waldemar Żurek, EAJ President Sabine Matejka, Honorary President of the IAJ José Igreja Matos, President of IUSTITIA Bartłomiej Przymusiński, Vice President of IUSTITIA Urszula Żółtak, former President Krystian Markiewicz and MEP Michał Wawrykiewicz.

The event gathered a significant audience. IAJ President Walter Barone, Honorary President Duro Sessa, Vice President Roland Kempfle, President of the African Group, Mohamed Redouane and former EAJ President Mikael Sjöberg attended the meeting, as well as members of other judicial organisations, such as the President of MEDEL, Mrs. Mariarosaria Guglielmi, the President of the Foundation Judges for Judges, Mrs. Tamara Trotman, representatives of CCBE and judges from all over Europe. Many of these judges who participated in the March in 2020, came together again to recall the importance of judicial independence for citizen’s rights.

On 9 January 2026 the UN Special Rapporteur also issued an official [statement](#) on the International Day of Judicial Independence – 1000 Robes March.

The IAJ will continue its efforts to promote an International Day of Judicial Independence. It is a reminder that every citizen has a right to judicial protection and an independent court. Judicial independence is the heart of the rule of law and indispensable in any democracy.

Participation of the IAJ in the Opening Ceremony of the Inter-American Judicial Year in San José, Costa Rica



The President of the International Association of Judges (IAJ), Mr. Walter Barone, and the President of the Ibero-American Group (IBA), Judge Adriana Orocú, participated in the opening ceremony of the Inter-American Judicial Year of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, held on 26 and 27 January 2026 in San José, Costa Rica.

On this occasion, President Barone attended the inauguration ceremony of the new President of the Court, Judge Rodrigo Mudrovitsch, and the Vice-President, Judge Patricia Pérez Goldberg, reaffirming the strong institutional ties between the IAJ and the Inter-American human rights system.

During the same period, Judge Barone also took part in the Inter-American Seminar “*Human Rights and Their Challenges*” (“*Derechos Humanos y sus Desafíos*”), which brought together judges, legal professionals, and representatives of judicial associations from across the region to discuss contemporary issues related to the protection of fundamental rights and judicial independence.

The event was also attended by representatives of member associations from Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Panama, and Paraguay, as well as by the President of FLAM, Mr. Marcelo Gallo.

In addition, the IAJ delegation was received by the President of the Supreme Court of Costa Rica Orlando Aguirre Gómez, for a meeting and an institutional visit to the Court, providing an opportunity to exchange experiences and strengthen cooperation between judicial institutions.

On the margins of the activities at the Inter-American Court, President Barone also met with Mr. Diego Sayán, former United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, and with Judge Blaise Tchikaya, Vice-President of the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights, further reinforcing the IAJ’s commitment to international judicial dialogue and cooperation.

Through its participation in these important events, the IAJ reaffirms its dedication to promoting judicial independence, the rule of law, and the protection of human rights worldwide.

Meeting with the UN special rapporteur – consultation on the appointment process of judges

On January 30, 2026, an online meeting took place with the UN Special Rapporteur, Prof. Margaret Satterthwaite.

As part of the preparation for her next thematic report on judicial appointments, the Special Rapporteur wanted to consult with regional judicial associations to better understand current challenges, best practices, and perspectives from the judiciary itself.

The President of the EAJ, Ms. Sabine Matejka, Vice President Roland Kempfle and Honorary Presidents Maja Tratnik, Gerhard Reissner and Duro Sessa joined the meeting together with representatives of member associations, representing 12 European countries.

Following the previous call for written input the consultation focused around specific problems with the selection and appointment of judges, current reforms and challenges faced by many European judiciaries.

After the meeting the EAJ's contribution to the EU rule of law report, prepared by the Working Group on the situation in member associations, was also shared with the Special Rapporteur.

The report of the UN Special Rapporteur will be presented at the 62nd session of the Human Rights Council in June 2026. Following the previous call for written input the consultation focused on specific problems.

The call: [OHCHR | Call for input of the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers for the next thematic report on principles of judicial appointments](#)

IAJ visit in Guatemala



In 2026, Guatemala faces a pivotal moment for its democratic legal system, with the election of three key institutions, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal, the Constitutional Court and the Prosecutor General, all crucial to safeguarding the rule of law and judicial independence.

As part of its mandate to protect and promote judicial independence, the International Association of Judges (IAJ) is closely monitoring developments that may affect the independence of the judiciary.

A delegation of European judges and academics, led by IAJ Vice President Dorota Zabłudowska, is currently in Guatemala to observe the electoral process, assess the state of the judicial system and formulate recommendations for the future. The delegates involved include Mrs. Astrid Bode, member of the Board of the German Association of Judges, Mr. Hans Peter Graver of the University of Oslo acting on behalf of the Norwegian Association of Judges, Mrs. Hanna Werth, President of the Swedish Association of Judges, and Mrs. Dorota Zabłudowska herself.

During their visit, the delegation is engaging with judges, lawyers, diplomats, civil society organisations and indigenous authorities in order to gain the most comprehensive understanding of the situation in the country. Their findings and recommendations will be presented in a report to be published in mid-April.

The mission has been organised in cooperation with IAJ, the “*Programa ACTuando Juntas Jotay*”, the “*Centro por la Justicia y el Derecho Internacional*” (CEJIL) and the “*Plataforma Internacional Contra la Impunidad and the Comisión Internacional de Juristas*”, all of which are actively committed to the protection of human rights.

The mission's press release is available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#). Here the full [Report](#).

German Justice Summit Weimar 2026



From 15th to 17th of April 2026, the German Association of Judges and Prosecutors (Deutscher Richterbund, DRB) held its 24th Justice Summit in the city of Weimar, dedicated to the main topic “*Save the Rule of Law!*”. The conference was attended by almost 1100 participants and featured high-level speakers such as the German Federal Minister of Justice Stefanie Hubig, the President of the Federal Supreme Court Mrs. Bettina Limperg, and renowned author Mrs. Juli Zeh who also is a Judge at the Constitutional Court of Brandenburg. The IAJ and the EAJ were represented by the IAJ President Barone, the EAJ President Matejka and the IAJ Vice President Kempfle.

The speakers and panellists analysed current threats to the rule of law, discussed initiatives of the judiciary, politics, and civil society to safe(guard) the rule of law, and the participants were given possibilities to engage in discussion in different formats themselves. IAJ Vice President Kempfle moderated a keynote speech of former Minister of Justice of the Republic of Poland, Mr. Adam Bodnar, and a discussion with the participants in which Mr. Bodnar highlighted the activities of the Polish Judges Associations IUSTITIA and Themis to engage directly with civil society.

During the opening ceremony, the DRB presented its 2026 Human Rights Award to Judge Miguel Ángel Gálvez for his commitment to fighting for the rule of law, for the rights of minorities, and against systemic corruption in his home country Guatemala. Judge Gálvez is a member of *Asociación Guatemalteca de Jueces por la Integridad* (AGJI) which has become a member of the IAJ in 2018. The threats he experienced due to his commitment for the rule of law were, among others, documented in a report of the IAJ and FLAM in 2022 ([FLAM and IAJ report on Guatemala – IAJ-UIM](#)).

Besides the key events, workshops held by practitioners for practitioners were offered as well, such as on the use of legal tech and AI in judicial work, on resilience training for judges and prosecutors, or on legal developments in various fields of law.

Canadian Senate Proceedings on the Bill to Declare 11 January “Judicial Independence Day”



As we reported in a previous [news item](#), a bill introduced by Canadian Senator Moreau is currently before the Canadian Senate, seeking to designate 11 January as “Judicial Independence Day.”

The Bill explicitly refers to the initiative of the International Association of Judges which took place in the streets of Warsaw on 11 January 2020, when tens of thousands of people, including hundreds of judges from 22 European countries, took part in the “1,000 Robes March.” It also refers to the IAJ’s proposal that the United Nations commemorate that event by establishing, at UN level, an international “Judicial Independence Day.”

Within the framework of this parliamentary initiative, on Monday, 8 June 2026, the Senate Committee on Human Rights heard evidence from Senator White, the sponsor of the bill, and from Justice Conlan, as part of its study of Bill S-219, An Act to establish Judicial Independence Day. In his address (reproduced below), the IAJ Vice-President and President of the ANAO Regional Group of the IAJ, Justice Clayton Conlan, expressed his gratitude to the Honourable Senator Moreau and the Honourable Senator White for their commitment to judicial independence. Bill S-219 represents a highly significant affirmation of this fundamental principle.

[Text of the Bill](#)

[Text of the speech of IAJ Vice President Justice Clayton Conlan](#)

9th Conference of the Presidents of the Courts of Appeal of the EU in Reims



On 3-5 June 2026 the 9th Conference of the Presidents of the Courts of Appeal of the EU, together with a Seminar of the French Presidents of Courts of Appeal, was held in Reims (France) under the organisation of the President of the Court of Appeal of Reims, IAJ Honorary President Mr. Christophe Régnard.

In attendance for the IAJ, beside Honorary President Régnard, were IAJ Honorary President Matos, IAJ First Vice-President and EAJ President Ms. Sabine Matejka, as well as the IAJ Secretary-General, Mr. Giacomo Oberto.

- [Programme of the event](#)
- [Word of thanks \(in French\) by Secretary-General Mr. Giacomo Oberto](#)
- International Conference on the subject: “Confidence in Justice”
 - [Presentation by IAJ Honorary President Mr. José Igreja Matos](#)
- International Conference on the subject: “The Role of Presidents of Courts of Appeal in Defending the Rule of Law:”
 - [Presentation by IAJ First Vice-President Ms. Sabine Matejka \(English\)](#)
 - Presentation by Secretary-General Mr. Giacomo Oberto:
 - [English](#)

- [French](#)
- Seminar of the French Presidents of Courts of Appeal
 - [Presentation \(in French\) by IAJ Secretary-General Mr. Oberto on the subject: “Le rôle de l’Association nationale italienne de la magistrature \(ANM\) dans le référendum sur la \(prétendue\) réforme de la justice en Italie”;](#)
 - [Presentation \(in French\) by IAJ Secretary-General Mr. Oberto on the subject: “Les défis mondiaux en matière de justice et le rôle de l’Union Internationale des Magistrats”.](#)

Meeting of the IAJ Secretariat-General with the President and the Secretary-General of the Italian Association of Judges and Prosecutors (ANM)

On 10 June 2026, a delegation of the IAJ Secretariat-General, led by Secretary-General Oberto and Deputies Secretaries General Aschettino and Gargiulo, together with the colleague, Mrs. Cristina Marzagalli (currently assisting the work of the Secretariat-General), met at the Palace of Justice in Rome with the *Associazione Nazionale Magistrati* (ANM), the Italian association of judges and prosecutors.

The ANM was represented at the highest level by its President, Mr. Giuseppe Tango, and its Secretary-General, Mr. Rocco Gustavo Maruotti.

The IAJ Secretariat-General renewed its thanks for the particular attention and assistance that the ANM has consistently devoted to the IAJ. President Tango and Secretary-General Maruotti, in turn, expressed their gratitude for the support provided by the IAJ during the difficult months of the campaign preceding the recent Italian referendum on a reform aimed at reducing judicial independence and autonomy ([see our previous news item on this topic](#)).

The two delegations discussed matters of common interest, including future cooperation in the international defence of the rule of law, the organisation of our activities, and possible forthcoming events.

IAJ participates in the International Union of Notaries’ training courses in Rome



From 30 June to 4 July 2026, the international training courses organised by the International Union of Notaries (UINL) were held in Rome, marking their thirteenth consecutive edition.

The initiative brought together law students, candidate-notaries, trainee notaries and young notaries from more than 40 countries. This year’s programme focused on the theme “International Mobility and Legal Certainty: Challenges for the Notary – Responses of the Notariat in a Globalised Legal Context.”

The training sessions addressed key areas of international legal practice, including family law, personal status, patrimonial matters, successions, corporate law and anti-money laundering issues.

The International Association of Judges participated in the event within the framework of its cooperation with the International Union of Notaries. The IAJ was represented by its Deputy Secretary General, Raffaele Gargiulo, in the session of 1 July 2026 at the Supreme Court in Rome, with the participation of a member of the Supreme Court.

The participation of the IAJ highlights the importance of dialogue and cooperation among legal professions at the international level, with the shared objective of promoting knowledge, professional exchange and the strengthening of the rule of law.

IAJ Participation in the International Bar Association Judges Forum in Abuja



On 9-10 July 2026, the International Bar Association Judges' Forum held its 2026 conference on the theme "*In Defence of Justice*." The IAJ was invited to contribute with speakers and was represented by President Walter Barone, Honorary President José Igreja Matos, and Vice-President Roland Kempfle.

The local hosting organisation was provided by the National Judicial Council of Nigeria, under the supervision of the Chief Justice of Nigeria, Kudirat Motonmori Olatokunbo Kekere-Ekun GCON, in co-operation with the Nigerian IAJ delegate, Justice Ngozika Okaisabor.

[Programme](#)

The passing of Honorary President Markel



The IAJ mourns the passing of Mr. Ernst Markel, a highly respected Austrian judge whose dedication to justice and integrity left a lasting mark on colleagues around the world.

On March 19, Ernst Markel passed away, leaving behind a legacy of professionalism, wisdom, and unwavering commitment to the rule of law. Throughout his distinguished career, he earned the esteem and admiration of peers for both his legal expertise and his personal integrity.

Mr. Markel served first as President of the European Association of Judges and then as the 23rd President of the International Association of Judges (IAJ). He was elected in Alicante in February 2003 and led the Association with distinction until November 2004, when he was named Honorary President.

His leadership was characterized by a deep commitment to judicial independence, international cooperation, and the strengthening of democratic principles. Those who had the privilege of working with him remember not only his competence but also his sense of duty.

His passing represents a great loss for the judiciary, both in Austria and internationally.

We extend our deepest condolences to his family, colleagues, friends, and all who knew him. In this moment of grief, our thoughts are with them. His memory will continue to inspire future generations of judges and legal professionals.

The IAJ Mourns the Passing of former IAJ Vice President Marcelle Kouassi



The IAJ's Presidency Committee and Secretariat-General have received the terrible news of the premature passing of Ms. Marcelle Kouassi, a highly respected Ivorian judge whose dedication to the IAJ and to its mission to defend judicial independence worldwide was well known to all its officials and to the delegates of its member associations.

After having served for many years as the delegate of Ivory Coast, Ms. Kouassi was elected in Rome, on 11 September 2021, Vice-President of the IAJ and President of the African Group. She was re-elected in Taipei in 2023 and remained in that position until 14 October 2025.

Her leadership was marked by a profound commitment to judicial independence, international cooperation, and the strengthening of democratic principles. Those who had the privilege of working with her remember not only her competence, but also her gentle and dignified character, her warm smile, and her unwavering dedication even during periods of illness.

Her passing represents a great loss not only for Africa, but for the worldwide judicial community as well.

The IAJ extends its deepest condolences to her family, to the judges' association of Ivory Coast, and to all the colleagues who knew her and worked alongside her. Her memory will remain with all those who had the privilege of collaborating with her and sharing experiences of collegiality and friendship.