



The Centre for the Independence of Judges and Lawyers (CIJL)

Background:

The ICJ Centre for the Independence of Judges and Lawyers (CIJL) acts as a focal point and centre of expertise within the ICJ to advance the independence of lawyers, judges and prosecutors.

In the face of continuing and in some countries, increasing attacks against lawyers, judges and prosecutors who carry out their duties administering justice in accordance with the rule of law, the ICJ World Congress mandated the Secretariat in 2008 to re-establish the CIJL and charged it particularly *“to act as a focal point in all matters concerning the independence and effectiveness of the judiciary and the legal profession in times of crisis”*. The Centre is based on the need to refocus attention on building strong independent and accountable civilian justice systems capable of protecting international human rights effectively. Through the CIJL the ICJ will be able to provide its advocacy with the necessary depth, continuity and coherence by bringing together expertise from, and experiences within, different jurisdictions around the world.

The CIJL will be supported by an advisory board consisting of high-level judges, lawyers and prosecutors, whose task will be to provide expertise and guidance, and to steer competent and forward-looking thinking on the independence and accountability of the legal profession.

Objectives:

- To provide a focal point and forum of expertise for judges, lawyers and prosecutors on the independence of legal systems and the legal profession;
- To engage in advocacy on the independence of legal systems and the legal profession, with an emphasis on its role in providing effective remedies and accountability to ensure the vindication of rights;
- To protect judges, lawyers and prosecutors under attack or threat and to mobilize the ICJ network and the legal community to respond to such cases and to threats to the independence of legal systems especially in times of crisis;
- To steer creative strategic thinking in the legal and judicial community on human rights issues and thereby strengthening the protective role of the legal community;

Activities of the CIJL:

Geneva Forum of Judges and Lawyers

The CIJL convenes an Annual *Geneva Forum of Judges and Lawyers* that will explore challenges of the independence of legal systems and the legal profession and its ability to effectively protect human rights.

The forum includes and is addressed to high-level members of the legal community and is complemented with legal research. The CIJL hopes that the *Geneva Forum* will become a recognized event that provides guidance for progressive debate within the legal community.

Monitoring & dissemination

The CIJL monitors developments on the independence of legal systems and the legal profession and act as a “clearinghouse” of information. Regular monitoring will also provide the basis for CIJL interventions and urgent appeals. In follow-up to the 2008 Geneva Declaration on the Role of Lawyers, Judges and Prosecutors in Times of Crisis, the CIJL will finalize and publish a legal commentary to the Declaration. The CIJL will from 2011 also publish information through a regular e-bulletin.

Protecting judges and lawyers & advocacy for independent legal systems

A central function of the CIJL is to advocate for independent legal systems and an independent legal profession, through country studies, high-level missions and legal interventions. The CIJL will intervene when judges, lawyers and prosecutors are at risk due to the exercise of their professional functions; sending high-level missions, issuing press releases and public statements or open letters as appropriate. It will also coordinate efforts to mobilize the legal community on such cases. The CIJL will undertake trial observations where judges or lawyers are on trial as a consequence of carrying out their professional functions, monitor the functioning of the administration of justice where there are systemic problems or where the independence of the judiciary is otherwise at risk in a specific case. Where judges and lawyers are at imminent risk it will seek to explore further protection measures in partnership with its network and other organizations.

Regional and global advocacy and mobilization

The CIJL will provide input in policy debates at the United Nations and regional level, including through regular engagement with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers and the UN Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders. Through the CIJL the ICJ expects to provide its network with sustained collaboration, thereby strengthening partnerships and increasingly engaging professional organizations on human rights issues addressed by the ICJ.

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