



The UIA Institute for the Rule of Law

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Atty. Nazan Moruglu, LL.M., Vice-President

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Dear Madam Vice-President,

Dear Colleague,

On behalf of the Institute for the Rule of Law of UIA (UIA-IROL), we acknowledge receipt of your letter dated June 24 to Mr. Jerome ROTH, UIA President. We thank you for sharing your concerns with us and we take them very seriously.

As you know UIA-IROL has been closely monitoring the situation in Turkey in recent years. We have been following with particular concern the most recent developments regarding the new legislation aimed at “reforming” the structure and election systems of bar associations, which was announced in early May and which became law on July 15, 2020. We are concerned that this legislation is retaliatory, as it was enacted shortly after criminal investigations were initiated against the Bar Associations of Ankara and Diyarbakir following their respective statements denouncing comments made by the head of Turkey’s Religious Affairs Directorate, Mr. Ali Erbaş. As we understand, Mr. Erbas made derogatory statements about the LGBT+ community during a sermon in late April, and the Ankara Bar filed a complaint against him based on those statements. The Dyarbakir Bar also addressed the inappropriate nature of Mr. Erbas’ comments. UIA-IROL has spoken out about both the attacks on the Bar Associations and the dangers inherent in the then-proposed legislation. We did so in a joint statement issued with the Paris Bar and European Bar Associations (please see [here](#)) and in a joint letter with several national and international organisations of lawyers (please see [here](#)).

In those statements, we joined with our colleagues to note with grave concern that, among other things, the new legislation was prepared without meaningful participation by representatives of the legal profession.

We are especially troubled that this reform will have a lasting impact on the strength of the three main bar associations in Turkey, namely the Bar Associations of Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, and that the legislation will reduce their capacity to uphold the Rule of Law and participate in the defense of human rights, as they historically have done.

We deplore the fact that, despite the almost unanimous opposition of the 80 local bar associations in Turkey, the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party) submitted the bill to Parliament on June 30, and that it was adopted by the Parliament's Justice Commission on July 6 and by the Assembly on July 11.

Consistent with the prior statements of UIA and UIA-IROL, including those we have promoted on social media,¹ we hereby reiterate our unwavering support of, and solidarity with, all bar associations and members of the legal profession in Turkey who, in recent weeks and despite extremely onerous circumstances, have worked courageously to defend their independence and their role as guardians of the rule of law, human rights and the core values of the legal profession.

UIA-IROL intends to issue a broader statement to publicly express its concerns regarding the new bill and its implications with regard to the independence of the legal profession in Turkey, and will call upon the international legal community to join with it to demand the withdrawal of the legislation.

We would be happy to meet with you and discuss potential additional actions UIA-IROL might undertake to support and assist Turkish bar associations.

Finally, we note that UIA-IROL is hosting a webinar on September 24 regarding the situation of lawyers under siege in Turkey. We would be most appreciative of your participation and in particular would be very grateful if the Istanbul Bar could provide an English-speaking representative to join our panel discussion. Please let us know if this is possible, and if so, please put us in touch with or send the name and contact information for that representative.

Yours sincerely,



Jacqueline R. SCOTT
Director General - UIA-IROL

¹ <https://twitter.com/JerryRothUIA/status/1279178769811431424?s=20> ;
<https://twitter.com/UIAdefense/status/1279045426130362368?s=20>