



The Law Society
of England and Wales



Voices of Justice: Protecting Lawyers' Freedom of Expression

Date: 17 October 2025 – 10.00 - 11.00 CET / 15.00 – 16.00 (GMT+7)

Format: Online Webinar

Conveners: Lawyers for Lawyers, Thai Lawyers for Human Rights, The Law Society of England and Wales and International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute

Registration link: [Registration webinar Voices of Justice: Protecting Lawyers's Freedom of Expression](#)

Background and objectives

As essential guardians of the rule of law, **lawyers play a fundamental role in guaranteeing freedom of expression**. At the same time, **their own freedom of expression serves a dual function**: it protects both their personal rights and their ability to act effectively on behalf of clients. Safeguarding this right is indispensable to maintaining the independence of the legal profession, ensuring access to justice, protecting human rights, and strengthening democratic institutions.

Principle 23 of the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers affirms that lawyers, like all citizens, enjoy the right to freedom of expression. More specifically, it underscores their right to participate in public debate on matters concerning the law, the judiciary, and human rights. This freedom is not merely a personal entitlement—it is a core professional responsibility. Within the bounds of confidentiality and ethics, lawyers are uniquely positioned to expose systemic deficiencies, draw attention to rights violations, and advocate for reform.

Despite these protections, lawyers in many countries continue to face intimidation, criminal prosecution, and even imprisonment for their legal statements—whether made in court or in the public sphere—as well as for their legal advocacy. The case of Arnon Nampa, a prominent Thai human rights lawyer, illustrates these risks in stark terms. Since 2020, he has faced 14 prosecutions under Section 112 of Thailand's Criminal Code (*lèse-majesté*), a broadly worded provision that criminalizes any expression deemed defamatory toward the monarchy. To date, Arnon has received convictions amounting to more than 29 years of custodial sentences, with several cases still pending. His case demonstrates how exemplary punishments are used to silence lawyers who exercise their right to freedom of expression.

Within this framework, the upcoming event will provide a platform for dialogue on the protection of lawyers' freedom of expression and the systemic challenges that threaten it.

Two new studies will be presented:

- A report **by the Law Society of England and Wales (LSEW)**, *"When Lawyers are Silenced: How Restrictions on Lawyers' Expression Undermine Rights, Justice, and Democracy"*, which highlights the troubling global pattern of restrictions on lawyers' freedom of expression, a right essential to the rule of law and access to justice.
- A **case study by Lawyers for Lawyers (L4L)**, *"Lawyers' Freedom of Expression on Trial: The Case of Arnon Nampa in Thailand"* analysing the multiple proceedings against Arnon Nampa under Thailand's *lèse-majesté* law and their implications for the independence of the legal profession.

By bringing together international experts, civil society organisations, and practitioners, the event aims to foster dialogue on the protection of lawyers' freedom of expression, highlight the importance of safeguarding independent legal advocacy, and identify strategies to strengthen legal protections in practice.



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Programme

10.00 - 10.05	Opening remarks by moderator – Sophie de Graaf, <i>Lawyers for Lawyers</i>
10.05 - 10.15	Keynote – Karuna Nundy, lawyer and Senior Advocate at the Supreme Court of India, member of the <i>High Level Panel of Experts on Media Freedom</i>
10.15 - 10.25	Presentation of “ <i>When Lawyers are Silenced: How Restrictions on Lawyers’ Expression Undermine Rights, Justice, and democracy</i> ” – Debra Long, <i>The Law Society of England and Wales</i>
10.25 - 10.35	Presentation of “ <i>Lawyers’ Freedom of Expression on Trial: The Case of Arnon Nampa in Thailand</i> ” – Natalia Segura Diez, <i>Lawyers for Lawyers</i>
10.35 - 10.45	Contextual remarks on broader environment for lawyers in Thailand – Akarachai Chaimaneekarakate, <i>Thai Lawyers for Human Rights</i>
10.45 – 11.00	Discussion and Q&A
11.00	Closing by moderator