

**The President of the Ukrainian National Bar Association,
Bar Council of Ukraine,
Lidiya Izovitova**

5th floor, 3 Borysoglibska St., Kyiv,
04070 Ukraine

16 September 2025

Dear Madam President,

I am writing on behalf of the International Bar Association's Bar Issues Commission (**BIC**) to express our support for the Ukrainian National Bar Association (**UNBA**) in its ongoing efforts to protect the independence of the legal profession and to safeguard advocates in Ukraine during this challenging time.

The IBA, established in 1947, is the world's leading organisation of international legal practitioners, bar associations and law societies. It has a membership of more than 80,000 individual lawyers and more than 190 bar associations and law societies spanning over 170 countries. The BIC supports the interests of the IBA's member organisations, which includes the UNBA. This involves arranging events to discuss issues that affect the legal profession globally, working groups that develop resources and guidelines for bar associations, and a Policy Committee advising IBA Council on key IBA resolutions and statements.

The BIC is committed to promoting, protecting and enforcing the role of an independent legal profession, and the rule of law, in the interest of its bar association members worldwide.

We thank you for bringing to our attention reports alleging violations of the prohibition on identifying lawyers with their clients, criminal prosecutions of lawyers for their professional activities, violations of attorney-client privilege, searches of lawyers' offices, the systematic identification of lawyers with their clients and their cases, as well as pressure on lawyers from law enforcement agencies in connection with the representation of certain categories of clients.¹

You have emphasised that this situation has become particularly acute in connection with the armed aggression of the Russian Federation, and the consideration of court cases concerning the restriction of the rights of persons associated with the aggressor state. Such actions could seriously undermine the foundations of the rule of law, and impede the effective functioning of the justice system.

¹ <https://en.unba.org.ua/activity/news/10674-the-number-of-cases-where-advocates-are-identified-with-their-clients-is-growing-unba-report.html>
https://en.unba.org.ua/assets/uploads/publications/Report_UNBA_Identification.pdf



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The documented cases that you have sent to us — including attacks on lawyers, harassment by law enforcement officials, public insults from local authorities, as well as the murders of advocates — illustrate the grave risks potentially faced by lawyers in Ukraine simply for performing their professional duties. These actions would also undermine the rule of law, erode public confidence in the justice system, and threaten constitutional guarantees such as the independence of the legal profession, the right to defence, and attorney–client privilege. We encourage the UNBA to continue systematically recording, analysing, and responding to these potential violations.

The BIC recognises the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (Havana, 1990), which affirm that lawyers must not be identified with their clients, and must be able to carry out their professional duties free from intimidation or undue pressure. In a democratic society governed by the rule of law, all individuals, regardless of the allegations against them, must enjoy the right to effective legal defence. Lawyers, in turn, must be protected when fulfilling this indispensable role.

We recognise the efforts by the UNBA to uphold these principles and protect the independence and safety of lawyers.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven Richman".

Steven Richman
Chair
Bar Issues Commission
International Bar Association

London

São Paulo

Seoul

The Hague

Washington DC

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