

2022 Annual Board Report Lawyers for Lawyers

Introduction

After two difficult years due to the global COVID-19 crisis, in 2022 Lawyers for Lawyers was able to resume all our planned activities. This included traveling abroad for trial monitoring and fact-finding missions and traveling to several international institutions to continue our lobby work in support of lawyers all around the world. We were furthermore able to add extra activities in the online sphere. This had led, for example, to an increase in our participation at the United Nations.

We furthermore received a large donation in 2022 which makes it possible for our organization in the coming years to further professionalize our approach to organizational development to enhance the effectiveness, potential, and capacity of our people, processes, and resources in achieving our mission.

Finally, it cannot go unmentioned that Lawyers for Lawyers received a huge honor in 2022: during a beautiful ceremony on March 14, 2022 in the Grote Kerk in Vlaardingen, former president of the Supreme Court Geert Corstens presented us with the Geuzenpenning. Kathleen Ferrier, chairman of the Geuzenpenning Foundation, explained the choice for Lawyers for Lawyers as follows: "The free and independent profession of lawyers is indispensable in the rule of law and of great importance for the protection of human rights around the world."

1. About Lawyers for Lawyers

1.1 General

Lawyers play a vital role in the protection of the rule of law and human rights. It is the responsibility of lawyers to protect and establish the rights of citizens from whatever quarter they may be threatened. Their work is indispensable for ensuring effective access to justice for all.

To fulfil their professional duties effectively, lawyers should be able to practice law freely and independently, without any fear of reprisal. Around the world, however, lawyers are harassed, threatened, attacked or worse for simply doing their job.

Lawyers for Lawyers is an independent, non-profit, civil society organization, based in the Netherlands. We are lawyers who promote the common values of lawyers and their contribution to the justice system. Around the world, we stand up for colleague-lawyers under threat.

Established in 1986, Lawyers for Lawyers has more than 30 years of experience in providing emergency support and assistance to lawyers in danger and creating awareness of the importance of the independent functioning of the legal profession to the protection of citizens' rights.

1.2 History

Lawyers for Lawyers has its roots in a solidarity campaign for lawyers in Argentina who ‘disappeared’ or were detained without trial under the military juntas from 1976-1983. The campaign was initiated by a Dutch lawyer and cartoonist, Willem van Manen, in the context of an international congress of lawyers hosted in Buenos Aires.

It showed that international solidarity of the legal profession can play an important role in order to defend and protect colleague-lawyers from attacks, especially since lawyers are bound by universal core values underpinning their profession.

Inspired by the lack of an independent lawyers’ organization dedicated to raising international awareness and recognition of the specific role of lawyers in the protection of the rule of law and human rights and responding to immediate threats to their safety and ability to perform their professional duties effectively, Lawyers for Lawyers was established in 1986.

The creation of Lawyers for Lawyers was supported by the Dutch sections of Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists (NJCM), the Netherlands Bar Association and the Netherlands Institute of Human Rights at University Utrecht.

1.3 Lawyers for Lawyers penguin logo

The first chair of Lawyers for Lawyers was Willem van Manen. Van Manen was not only a lawyer, but also a cartoonist. He designed the Lawyers for Lawyers penguin-logo, based on his famous series of penguin lawyers’ cartoons.

2. Mission, Vision, Core Values and Goals

2.1 Mission

Promote and protect the independence of lawyers

Lawyers for Lawyers promotes and preserves the independence of the legal profession worldwide and defends the professional rights of lawyers to provide legal services safely and independently, without fear of reprisal. We safeguard lawyers’ role in protecting the rule of law and human rights and ensuring effective justice for all by acting wherever lawyers are under threat.

In doing so, we refer to internationally recognized human rights laws and standards, including the [UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers](#).

2.2. Vision

Every lawyer can practice law independently without fear of reprisal

We strive for a world where lawyers can practice law freely and independently to effectively fulfil their role in upholding the rule of law and the protection of human rights. Lawyers should be able to do their job without improper interference or fear of reprisal. Always and everywhere. Also, when that does not suit the government, the bar association, or the establishment.

2.3 Core Values

Put lawyers under threat at the heart of our work

When we work to promote and protect the independence of lawyers, we are committed to:

- Put lawyers under threat at the heart of our work.
- Provide support to meet expressed needs by lawyers whose professional guarantees, immunities, and privileges are violated.
- Analyse root causes of why lawyers face reprisals, guided by local lawyers and other stakeholders.
- Identify the most effective ways to achieve tangible impact and lasting progress.
- Act independently, objectively, professionally, and with integrity.
- Leverage resources through collaboration and coordination with other actors working toward common goals.
- Improve outcomes through the creation of solidarity within the community.

3. Strategies, programs and activities

To achieve our mission, vision, and goals, we conduct three strategic **programs**: Defend, Empower, and Influence. Through these programs, we implement projects and activities to **support lawyers** at risk worldwide and **raise awareness** of the importance of the independent functioning of lawyers for the protection of the rule of law and human rights and fundamental freedoms to which all persons are entitled and to ensure effective access to justice for all.

1. DEFEND

We **defend** lawyers around the world whose professional guarantees, immunities, or privileges are violated or jeopardized, including through forms of reprisals against them for simply doing their job, and **ensure accountability** where such acts occur.

In 2022 we contributed to this goal by:

- Providing tailor-made support to individual lawyers at risk, guided by the lawyers concerned or their representatives.
- Monitoring and highlighting violations of lawyers' rights.
- Conducting advocacy on targeted impunity cases.
- Building networks and alliances to act in coordination and solidarity.

2. EMPOWER

We **empower** lawyers and associations of lawyers to fulfil their role in upholding human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In 2022 we contributed to this goal by:

- Sharing best practices on core values and ethics underpinning the legal profession.
- Giving training sessions on the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers and the use of human rights mechanisms

3. INFLUENCE

We **advocate** for laws, regulations, and practices that provide or reinforce effective protections for the independent functioning and security of lawyers in accordance with internationally recognized laws and standards at global, regional, and national levels.

In 2022 we contributed to this goal by:

- Engaging with global and regional bodies and their mechanisms to advocate for standards, resolutions, and recommendations that strengthen the independence and security of lawyers.
- Lobbying governments and professional associations of lawyers to adopt, implement, and enforce effective legal protections, including effective legal remedies against improper interferences, and change laws, regulations, and practices that encroach on the independence of lawyers.
- Promoting the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers and other guiding principles recognising the independence of the legal profession as an essential component of the rule of law.
- Informing the public about what lawyer independence is, how it affects peoples' lives or what life might be like without it, and what governments should do to ensure the independent functioning of lawyers in accordance with international standards.

4. Methodology & Impact 2022

Lawyers for Lawyers has a strong track record in acting quickly and effectively to support lawyers in danger. Our international network and the way we operate, enable us to be flexible and amendable to fast-changing situations and developments.

Lawyers for Lawyers are practicing lawyers and human rights experts. We are therefore particularly well placed to monitor and highlight violations of lawyers' rights and threats to their independence and to raise awareness of the harmful consequences thereof for upholding the rule of law and the protection of human rights.

Our board of directors, staff members and lawyer-volunteers have deep knowledge and expertise of the laws, standards and ethics underpinning the legal profession, the concept of the rule of law as well as

international human rights laws and mechanisms. They also know how to apply these laws, concepts and mechanisms in practice.

4.1 Who we support - Where we work

Lawyers for Lawyers supports lawyers at risk in all continents of the world, especially lawyers who work in challenging environments.

We stand with lawyers who have the formal status of lawyers in accordance with domestic laws and are bound by recognized standards and ethics of the legal profession. At the same time, we may include lawyers who exercise the functions of lawyers but are not or not any longer formally recognized as such, for example because access to the legal profession has been refused to them or they have been suspended or disbarred on improper grounds as a reprisal of their work.

On the individual level we prioritize support to lawyers who are in imminent danger or acutely vulnerable. However, since our resources are limited, we are forced to make choices. These choices are based upon our capacity, expertise, and networks, as well as potential opportunities and impact. Also relevant is whether support is already or can be better provided by other organizations.

4.2 What we do - How we collaborate

In addition to emergency support and rapid assistance to lawyers in immediate danger, we provide a range of tools and preventive support to defend and protect lawyers from attacks and improper interference and to strengthen their international recognition and legal protection. At the same time, we empower lawyers and associations of lawyers to support, safeguard, and advocate for the independence of the legal profession on a more lasting basis at the domestic level.

We promote respect for the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers. In doing so, we act in collaboration or coordination with international bar associations, lawyers' organizations and other civil society actors.

Lawyers for Lawyers is a member of the BMO (*Breed Mensenrechten Overleg*), a coalition of human rights and development organizations based in the Netherlands.

We also engage with governments and international and regional intergovernmental institutions and their mechanisms. In 2013, Lawyers for Lawyers was granted consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), providing us access to this Council and its many subsidiaries bodies, to the Human Rights Council, to the various human rights mechanisms of the UN, as well as to special events organized by the President of the General Assembly.

4.3 How we make an impact

Lawyers for Lawyers acknowledges that it is often hard to tell whether our activities have contributed to or resulted in reducing or preventing attacks and restrictions against lawyers or improving legal protections, and if so, to what extent. When it comes to supporting lawyers, we define success in terms

of making a positive difference for individual lawyers. We make a positive impact, when lawyers feel morally supported, when we offer a source of strength in times of need, or when their personal situation changes positively, e.g. they are released from prison, travel bans are lifted, disciplinary or criminal proceeding are withdrawn, etc. Our impact is also positive when lawyers feel empowered to support their colleague lawyers at home.

When it comes to structural support, we define success in terms of progress, e.g. is there an increased number of recommendations made by United Nations human rights mechanisms, strengthening the independence of lawyers and the legal profession that were originally issued by Lawyers for Lawyers or by organizations we are collaborating with or by governments we have engaged with; is there an increase in the number of governments we have engaged with, accepting those recommendations; are those supported recommendations implemented effectively; and do they result in positive changes for lawyers discharging their professional duties.

When defining performance indications for specific projects, we make a distinction between what outcomes may be reasonably expected, given our circle of influence, and what outcomes would be best in terms of achieving our mission, vision and goals.

To understand our impact, we monitor and evaluate the results of our activities on an on-going basis.

4.4 Impact examples 2022

Support to individual lawyers

In 2022, we commenced the Environmental Lawyers Campaign. This important campaign will focus on the work of environmental lawyers from around the world. The campaign was launched on 19 May 2022 during a seminar and aims to raise awareness about the increasing attacks against lawyers working on environmental cases. Monthly, articles introducing environmental lawyers from different countries and their work are published on L4L's website. Interviews with lawyers from Uganda, Malaysia, Zimbabwe, Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia have been published in 2022. These lawyers have worked on a range of environmental issues, from wetlands protection to illegal mining, and have all faced difficulties in their work.

Moreover, in December 2022, L4L organized a writing action. On 10 December - international Human Rights Day – L4L invited our supporters to write a greeting card to an imprisoned lawyer. The greeting cards are meant as a sign of support and solidarity to lawyers serving a (long) prison sentence from their colleagues from the Netherlands. We also called upon our network to write letters to the Hong Kong authorities to ask for the release of lawyer Chow Hang Tung. Ms Chow is a human rights lawyer from Hong Kong who has been imprisoned as a reprisal for her human rights work.

Furthermore, on 9 February 2022, lawyer Hejaaz Hizbullah from Sri Lanka was released on bail after spending almost two years in pre-trial detention. Mr. Hizbullah is a minority rights advocate and legal counsel for Muslim victims of human rights violations in Sri Lanka. He was arrested on 14 April 2020 on

unsubstantiated terrorism charges. Mr. Hizbullah was released on bail by the Court of Appeal after continuous international pressure. As stated by Mr. Hizbullah's family: *"The role played by the international community in raising concerns with respect to Hejaaz's incarceration had an immense impact in facilitating his release. We are extremely grateful for your interventions and support."* Although Mr. Hizbullah has been released on bail, his trial is still ongoing. L4L continues to support his case and has pressured the Sri Lankan authorities to drop the charges against him.

In 2022, L4L has conducted multiple trial monitoring missions to Turkey. In Turkey, there is a pattern of lawyers being identified with their clients and consequently being criminalized and prosecuted for fulfilling their professional duties. A large number of cases against lawyers and bar associations is currently pending in the Turkish courts. Amongst others, L4L representatives have attended hearings in the ÇHD case that started ten years ago, in which 22 lawyers stand trial on terrorist charges. Also, L4L has attended multiple hearings in the trials against the board members of the Diyarbakir Bar and Ankara Bar Association. The trials against bar associations that are outspoken on human rights issues are an increasingly pressing and concerning issue. Lawyers from Turkey have stated that they notice better adherence to fair trial standards by the judges when international observers are present in the court rooms.

Within our empower program, we provided trainings to a group of North-African lawyers and a group of South East Asian lawyers online. The trainings were based on needs that were identified during conversations prior to the trainings and both groups informed us that they appreciated the gained knowledge very much and can use the tools and mechanisms presented in their daily practice as lawyers.

Structural support

In 2022, we submitted 17 written interventions and 27 oral statements to the United Nations. This included UPR (mid-term) reports on the DRC, the Netherlands, Algeria, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Zimbabwe and Poland. In the sessions that have taken place thus far in 2023 on these countries, attention has been paid and recommendations have been made with regards to the protections of human rights defenders, including lawyers.

Furthermore, we have worked on a larger report on the situation of lawyers in Belarus in cooperation with partner organizations and launched this report at a side event held during an international forum on human rights. We also participated in a fact-finding mission to Colombia to research the situation of lawyers in Colombia. The report on that mission will be published in 2023.

The war in Ukraine also had consequences for the lawyers in the country. Lawyers for Lawyers had been working with lawyers from Ukraine already for a longer period of time. In 2022, we expressed our support to the lawyers in Ukraine and gave them a platform to talk about the situation in wartime. In a March 2022 interview, Iurii Grygorenko talked about the practical consequences for lawyers in Ukraine. On May 19, 2022, Dr. Valentyn Gvozdiy, vice-president of the National Bar Association, spoke at an event organized by Lawyers for Lawyers and the Amsterdam Bar Association about the difficulties for criminal lawyers in particular who have to do their work during a state of siege.

5. Board, staff and volunteers 2022

5.1 Board

Lawyers for Lawyers has a Board of Directors comprised of practicing lawyers and human rights experts .

Board members in 2022:

Irma van den Berg - President

Maaïke de Jong – Secretary

Tony Vermeulen - Treasurer

Judith Lichtenberg - Member

Jeroen Brouwer – Member

Sander Oudshoorn – Member

5.2 Volunteers

Lawyers for Lawyers’ volunteers are essential to fulfil our mission. They also significantly outnumber paid staff. In 2022, Lawyers for Lawyers had a pool of 70 highly motivated and skilled volunteers, consisting mainly of practising lawyers, as well as a management assistant. Since we had many more lawyers signing up as a volunteer, we have started a waiting list for new volunteers.

In 2022, we have strengthened our onboarding and training program, including necessary policies and procedures. We have made changes to our volunteer policy and developed a volunteer program, leveraging volunteers’ strengths and interests, and transforming their opportunities for engagement in a more tailored approach.

5.3 Staff

In 2022, we increased the total FTEs of the office of Lawyers for Lawyers to 2,7 FTE. Furthermore, the work of the staff was supported by 3 legal interns who work 8 hours a week.

6. Funding and Financial resources 2022

Lawyers for Lawyers is supported entirely by financial donations and in-kind support, mainly from individual lawyers, law firms, lawyers’ associations and other organizations related to the legal profession. We raise funds by cultivating relationships and partnerships in the legal sector and through third- party events. We sometimes also receive royalties from an author or composer for each copy of a legal book that has been sold or fees for a service that has been provided, such as a legal training.

Lawyers for Lawyers has been recognized as a charity by the Central Bureau on Fundraising (CBF), i.e. “*CBF-erkend goed doel*”. Lawyers for Lawyers is also tax-exempted under Dutch law. It qualifies as a Public Benefit Organisation (ANBI status).

The reserves of Lawyer for Lawyers are at a level that is considered to be justified by the Herkströter Committee (Commission on Capital Standards for Charities), i.e. a continuity reserve of a maximum of one and a half times the annual turnover.

In 2019, Lawyers for Lawyers developed a fundraising plan with the aim of expanding and diversifying our funding sources and in-kind support in order to safeguard our financial sustainability, be able to do long-term planning and reach our full potential. In 2020, we released our ‘friend’ initiative – asking individual lawyers to support us financially for a minimum of five years. We also expanded our ‘partner’ law firms – law firms that support us financially for a period of three years. In 2022, we also received funding for specific projects from other non-profit organizations. We will continue to explore this option for raising funds in the following years.

In 2022, the board of Lawyers for Lawyers decided that we will be exploring new funding opportunities for certain projects and activities under our Empower program, including from government bodies, to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. We will also explore opportunities for partnerships with other civil society actors in empowerment projects.

At the end of 2022, we received a large donation which makes it possible for our organization in the coming five years to further professionalize our approach to organizational development to enhance the effectiveness, potential, and capacity of our people, processes, and resources in achieving our mission. The board of Lawyers for Lawyers designated this donation as a reserve to ‘increase capacity’ of our organization and in 2023 a plan will be written on how to spend this donation to reach this goal. Due to this large donation, in 2022 our income has been much higher than originally budgeted for. Our spending has been more or less in line with the budget for 2022. This means that we closed 2022 with a high positive result.

7. 2023 and beyond

7.1 Our focus in 2022 - 2025

The board of Lawyers for Lawyers established a Strategic Plan in 2022, for the years 2022-2025, which will be followed in 2023. The purpose of this Strategic Plan is to inform our continued journey to be an internationally recognized expert in promoting and safeguarding the independence of individual lawyers and the legal profession across the world, serving as a catalyst for a safe and enabling environment for lawyers.

In the next three years, we will focus on two key priorities. First, we will continue to strengthening our work in support of lawyers under threat. We will do so by further enhancing, aligning, and expanding our Defend, Empower, and Influence programs, and through ongoing collaboration and alliances’ building with stakeholders.

Notably, we will:

- Set up a dedicated trial monitoring project to improve and expand our trial observation activities explore new and additional opportunities to participate in international and regional human rights mechanisms, highlight how global challenges have increased risks for certain groups of lawyers, and align these activities with targeted advocacy and empowering lawyers to achieve national-level change.
- Expand and enhance capacity building support for lawyers and associations of lawyers to strengthen their ability to fulfil their professional duties and responsibilities over time.
- Amplify our awareness raising efforts to be sure people know what lawyer independence is and why it can't be given up, especially in countries where the rule of law is under duress.

Secondly, we will enhance the effectiveness, potential, and capacity of our people, processes, and resources in achieving our mission by further professionalizing our approach to organization development.

Notably, we will:

- Enhance our policies, procedures, and practices on employment conditions, personal growth and development, succession planning, as well as diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) across the organization, and transform our volunteer engagement in a more tailormade approach.
- Improve our communication skills and strategies, and expand our concerted efforts and resources allocated to it.
- Expand and diversify our fundraising strategies as well as our funding sources, in-kind support, partnerships, and collaborations.

Throughout the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2022 – 2025, we will monitor and evaluate our progress and results and capture lessons learned. We will solicit and act upon feedback from lawyers at risk, board members, staff members, volunteers, and other stakeholders, and be adaptive to changing developments and demands as appropriate.