



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEMOCRATIC LAWYERS

CHAUSÉE DE HAECHT 55, 1210, BRUXELLES-BRUSSELS, BELGIQUE-BELGIUM

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COMMUNIQUE 19 TH CONGRESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEMOCRATIC LAWYERS

Kathmandu, Nepal | 18–20 July 2025

The International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL) successfully convened its 19th Congress in Kathmandu, Nepal, from 18 to 20 July 2025. Hosted by the Progressive and Professional Lawyers' Association (PPLA-Nepal), the Congress carried the theme "The Role of Democratic Lawyers in Promoting and Defending Peoples' Rights, Peace, and International Law in the Face of Fascism, Genocide, Militarization, and Wars of Aggression."

The event was opened by newly elected PPLA Chair Amar Thapa and General Secretary Bhuwan Prasad Niroula. The Rt. Hon. KP Sharma Oli, Prime Minister of Nepal, formally inaugurated the Congress. Dignitaries who addressed the opening ceremony included Attorney General Ramesh Badal; Hon. Minister Ajay Kumar Chaurasiya; Mr. Rabindra Adhikari of the Nepal Peace and Solidarity Council; Hon. Achyut Mainali, Member of Parliament; Ms. Kalpana Chapagain, Member of the Constituent Assembly; and Mr. Bijay Prasad Mishra, President of the Nepal Bar Association. IADL President Jeanne Mirer delivered opening remarks contextualizing the Congress theme and affirming IADL's commitment to international solidarity and promoting peace and justice and accountability for violations of international humanitarian law (IHL).

Over 250 delegates attended, including 128 from different national associations and more than 120 from Nepal. The countries which participated both in person and online include those from Algeria, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Greece, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Palestine, Portugal, Philippines, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Togo, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, and Vietnam.

The second day began with outgoing IADL President Jeanne Mirer giving a historical overview of IADL's work and achievements, followed by Secretary-General Jan Fermon, who outlined the Congress agenda. This was followed by a keynote address by Raji Sourani of the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, who called upon democratic legal practitioners worldwide to intensify efforts against the ongoing genocide in Gaza and to employ all legal and political avenues to demand a ceasefire and pursue accountability. Sourani acknowledged the ongoing global efforts by Palestinian and solidarity movements and initiatives, such as the International Court of Justice genocide case filed by South Africa and the International Criminal Court arrest warrants against Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, among others.

A tribute was held in honor of veteran IADL leaders: former Vice-President Roland Weyl (France), President Emeritus Jitendra Sharma (India), and former Bureau Member Mario Joseph (Haiti). Videos, pictures, and testimonies recalling memories of struggles, achievements, and solidarity were shared. Three tribute books were distributed for attendees to write their messages to their fallen comrades.



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The following first four concurrent commission workshops convened:

- Commission 1: On Palestine (Chair: Micòl Savia; Co-chair: Suman Kumar Shrestha; Rapporteur: Charlotte Kates)
- Commission 2: On the Struggle for women's rights: equality, non- discrimination and state responsibility (Chair: Evelyn Dürmayer; Co-chair: Bishnu Maya Bhusal; Rapporteur: Rashida Manjoo, former UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls)
- Commission 3: On Crisis in International Law and International System (Chair: Jan Fermon; Co-chair: Ishwori Prasad Bhattarai; Rapporteur: Ojaswee Bhattarai)
- Commission 4: On Fascism (Chair: Suzanne Adely; Co-chair: Milan Dharel; Co-chair and Rapporteur: Jaribu Hill)

The final day of the Congress began with a presentation of Nepal's peace process and transitional justice, which was moderated by Mr. Rabindra Adhikari, coordinator of the Nepal Peace and Solidarity Council. Former Nepal Minister Mr. Agni Prasad Kharel discussed transitional justice and human rights, followed by Mr. Mahendra Bahadur Pandey, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, on the history and future of Nepal's peace process. An engaging open forum followed.

Four additional commissions were simultaneously assembled:

- Commission 5: On Palestine (continuation) (Chair: Micòl Savia; Co-chair: Suman Kumar Shrestha; Rapporteur: Charlotte Kates)
- Commission 6: On Peace and War (Chair: Neri Colmenares; Co-chair: Ram Janak Katwal; Rapporteur: Aayur Phuyal)
- Commission 7: On the Human Right to a Clean and Healthy Environment (Chair: Bernard Anoumo Dodji Bokodjin; Co-chair: Ghanendra Shrestha; Rapporteur: Maria Kristina Conti)
- Commission 8: On Labor and Labor Rights (Chair: Jeanne Mirer; Co-chair: Bhakti Ram Ghimire; Rapporteur: Edwin Dela Cruz).

Afterwards, each rapporteur presented an overview of the workshop proceedings, a summary of papers presented, discussion points, and proposed action plans to the plenary.

The General Assembly then convened, with the delegates reviewing and approving amendments to the IADL Constitution. The new executive body of Bureau members were elected by acclamation, bringing the total number to 48. These included our imprisoned Bureau member, Selçuk Kozagacli, imprisoned in Turkey for his work as a lawyer, who also sent his greetings from prison to the Congress.

Micòl Savia and Mohamed Randera were the two sole nominees for the secretary general and treasurer positions, respectively, and were elected by acclamation by the General Assembly.



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Edre Olalia, incumbent IADL transitional president and National Union of Peoples' Lawyers (Philippines) chairperson, and Jun Sasamoto, president of the Confederation of Lawyers in Asia Pacific (COLAP) and Vice-President of Japan Lawyers International Solidarity Association (JALISA) were nominated for the presidency.

After voting by secret ballot, the Association's Commission on Elections officially announced Edre Olalia as the next president of the IADL. The General Assembly further elected Jeanne Mirer and Roland Weyl as Presidents Emeriti, recognizing their significant contributions to the work of the IADL.

Outgoing Secretary General Jan Fermon presented the draft of the Kathmandu Declaration, which was discussed and amended on the floor. The finalized version will be circulated following review by the newly elected Bureau, which held its initial meeting the following day.

The IADL Congress was formally closed by a speech from newly elected IADL President Edre Olalia, declaring the Congress a success and calling for principled unity to pursue IADL's aims.

The Congress closed with a solidarity and cultural night celebrating international unity, resistance, and the enduring work of peoples' lawyers.

The IADL will prioritize the following areas of work in the coming period:

1. End the genocide in Palestine, especially in Gaza, and defend the Palestinian people's right to self-determination.
2. Oppose the onslaught on international law and defend all achievements of peoples' struggles against fascism and colonialism enshrined in international law.
3. Fight contemporary fascism and imperialism
4. Defend world peace and security; oppose militarization and a new arms race.
5. Support efforts to create multilateral initiatives for political and economic cooperation such as BRICS and Friends of the Charter.
6. Oppose unilateral coercive measures and their extraterritorial effects, including the Blockade on Cuba.
7. Advance accountability for international crimes; counter the criminalization of legal work and representation.
8. Defend labor rights, fight racism, defend migrants, and support the struggle for human dignity.
9. Support the human right to a clean and healthy environment through climate reparations, ecological debt cancellation, and the democratic control of natural resources.
10. Eliminate all forms of gender-based violence and the full protection of the rights of women and gender and sexual minorities.