



## *International Day of the Endangered Lawyer- 24 January 2023 - Afghanistan*

MEDEL wants to mark the International Day of the Endangered Lawyer, January 24, that this year is focused on Afghanistan, by recalling the fundamental role that lawyers play in ensuring the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

What we can observe in each and every context where the Rule of Law collapsed is that - by persecuting lawyers, restricting their activity and limiting their freedom of association- authoritarian regimes can turn the legal system and the courts into instruments of oppression.

The current situation in Afghanistan of lawyers, judges and prosecutors - particularly women - which has been the object of specific warnings by international observers<sup>1</sup>, justifies an increasing concern. This applies primarily to those who have acted in the past for the establishment of an effective and independent justice system. Their situation remains one of not only unacceptable restriction of their professional activity, but also of extreme risk for their personal security.

Moreover, no form of collective protection is any longer available for the lawyers. After the takeover by the Taliban in August 2021, the Independent Bar Association, established in 2008, was deprived of its licensing authority while the review of current licences was imposed excluding women from this process.

MEDEL wishes to join all those voices who are celebrating the day of the Endangered Lawyer calling on the international community to implement any possible and effective action for:

- protecting lawyers, judges, prosecutors and human rights defenders who continue to be in an extremely dangerous situation in Afghanistan;
- providing international protection to those who have managed to flee their country but still find themselves in a very precarious position, facing the risk of being repatriated;
- obtaining the repeal of the process of annihilation of the Rule of Law implemented by the Taliban regime, as well as of those practices that deny all international

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/ijudiciary/statements/2023-01-17/202301-stm-sr-ijl-sr-afghanistan-day-endangered-lawyer.pdf>

standards concerning the role of lawyers in a democratic society and the principle of non-discrimination.

*January 23, 2023*