

Day of the Endangered Lawyer: Profiles

Chair: Lord Phillips (Supreme Court Judge): Lord Phillips is a retired Law Lord and past President of the Supreme Court of England and Wales. Lord Phillips accepts appointments as an Arbitrator. He was Called to the Bar in 1962 and took silk in 1978. During his time at the Bar of England and Wales he specialised in Commercial Law and Admiralty Law. He was appointed a Judge of the Queens Bench Division, where he sat in the Commercial Court. In 1999 he was elevated to the Court of Appeal, appointed Master of the Rolls in 2000 and Lord Chief Justice in 2005. Lord Phillips was appointed as Senior Law Lord in 2008 and oversaw the transition of the House of Lords to the Supreme Court in 2009, when he became the Court's first President. He remains a non-permanent judge of the Court of Final Appeal in Hong Kong. Between 2014 and 2018 he was President of the Qatar International Court & Dispute Resolution Centre. During his time in Judicial Office he presided over some of the most celebrated legal cases, including the complex prosecutions relating to the Maxwell Pension Funds, and also of Barlow Clowes. He also conducted the Public Inquiry into the outbreak and effects of BSE.

Kirsty Brimelow QC (Barrister Doughty Street Chambers) - international human rights barrister and former Chair of Bar Human Rights Committee. Her tireless pro bono work has touched four continents, spanning from Europe all the way to South America. As Chair of the Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales (BHRC) for 6 years, Kirsty was recognised in 2018 for her dedication to advancing international human rights, with her pioneering work inspiring other barristers to follow in her footsteps.

German Romero (Colombian human rights lawyer) - a human rights lawyer representing those victimized by the Colombian Armed Forces, as well as victims of other cases like the 1985 siege of the Palace of Justice. Germán Romero has received several threats, including death threats, for his work defending victims of state crimes. Romero is a lawyer for the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, and in his talk, will share the difficulties faced by victims who seek justice through the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP). 2020 marked the 15th anniversary of a massacre that took the lives of seven members of the Peace Community, a case that is still awaiting full justice. This struggle for justice is apparent in many cases of high-level military officials who held positions during the years when massive numbers of extrajudicial killings by members of the armed forces took place. In his talk, Romero will also share his insights on the path towards full justice and will discuss the criminalization of social protest in Colombia.

Stephen Kinuthia Mwangi (Kenyan human rights paralegal) - Mwangi is the administrative coordinator of Mathare Social Justice (MSJC), a local organisation that seeks to “promote social justice through engaged community and social movement platforms.” In addition to Mwangi’s role in both the establishment and administration of MSJC, he is also currently training as a lawyer and working as a paralegal so he can better represent the interests of the residents of urban settlements.

Mandira Sharma (Nepalese human rights lawyer) - Mandira Sharma co-founded Advocacy Forum in 2001, Nepal’s trail blazing organisation of human rights lawyers. Mandira grew up in a remote area in western Nepal and, encouraged by her mother, became the first woman in her village to become a lawyer. She studied in Kathmandu and gained a scholarship to do her L.L.M. (Master of Law) at the University of Essex.

John Dew (Former UK diplomat and PBI UK Patron) is a PBI UK patron and former ambassador to Colombia. He joined the Diplomatic Service in 1973 before working in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, where he served postings in Ireland, the Falklands, and Madrid. After returning to the FCO as Head of the Latin America and Caribbean Department 2000–03, he was seconded to Lehman Brothers in London 2003–04 as Senior Policy Adviser before being appointed

HMA, Havana in May 2004. His retirement posting in Bogota ended in 2012, when he began a new career as a painter and printmaker.

Chris Owen (Simmons & Simmons) - Partner and head of the Business and Human Rights group at international law firm Simmons & Simmons. Chris is a specialist in the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) particularly supply chain due diligence and operational grievance mechanisms. His practice focuses on advising clients on claims involving mass harm (typically for environmental pollution), breaches of health and safety or alleged violations of human rights. He advises on claims in the English Court and works in collaboration with local counsel on overseas proceedings. Chris, who heads up the firm's business and human rights team and is one of the Partners responsible for pro bono, co-led the PBI UK-Simmons and Simmons toolbox for Human Rights Defenders at Risk Project. The toolbox is an innovative tool for defenders working on business and human rights with factsheets the obligations of companies to respect human rights, as set out in the UNGPs.

Guy Beringer (Rule of Law Bingham Centre/ Alliance for Lawyers at Risk) - Guy Beringer is the non-executive chairman of the UKEF Board. ... Guy is Chairman of The Legal Education Foundation and City Music Services. He is a Director of BCKR, an Adjunct Professor at the Imperial College Business School and Co-Chair of the Bingham Centre Appeal Board. Guy is also part of the executive committee of the Alliance for Lawyers at Risk a pro bono network that supports lawyers and other HRDs at risk.

Emma Lough (Lawyers Against Poverty) - Emma is the Director of Lawyers Against Poverty. LAP is a UK charity and growing global movement of lawyers and social justice advocates committed to alleviating poverty worldwide. LAP has been running for the past five years as an Oxfam programme and have just established as an independent charity. Members offer their time to volunteer with legal projects and support initiatives through our Justice Fund that increase access to justice around the world. Emma was previously at the Thomson Reuters Foundation as Programme Manager for the UK and Europe.

Sue Wilman (Law Society of England and Wales/ Colombia Caravana UK Lawyers Group) - Sue Willman is a partner in Deighton Pierce Glynn, member of the Colombia Caravana UK Lawyers Group and Chair-Elect of the Law Society Human Rights Committee. The Colombian Caravana is a UK based charity that works to promote access to justice and uphold the rule of law in Colombia. We work together with Colombian human rights lawyers and human rights defenders to ensure respect for human rights. Sue is a senior DPG partner with almost 30 years' experience of innovative public interest litigation and collaboration with non-profit organisations and campaigners, first in a Law Centre and since 2003 at the firm. Sue is particularly well known for her work to protect the basic rights of migrants, whether refugees or EU nationals. In recent years, she has led DPG's international human rights work.

Susi Bascon, Director Peace Brigades international UK. Susi Bascon is the Director of Peace Brigades International (PBI) UK Section, an organisation that provides tailored support and protection to over 1000 human rights defenders around the world. Susi completed an MBA and an MSc in Development Studies and worked in the private sector for several years, before moving into the voluntary sector. She worked as an international observer for PBI in Mexico and began leading the PBI UK office in 1998. Jointly with late patron Sir Henry Brooke, she launched the Alliance for Lawyers at Risk in 2010, a network of high profile pro bono lawyers interested in supporting HRDs at risk. Susi also led PBI's campaign for the nomination of the global community of human rights defenders for the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize. In 2020 Susi developed the 'Portraits of Resilience, Hope and Solidarity' project jointly with film maker Manu Valcarce collecting testimonies of over 100 HRDs across different regions.