



UIA Union Internationale des Avocats
International Association of Lawyers
Unión Internacional de Abogados

“ Rassembler les avocats du monde • Bringing Together the World's Lawyers • Reunir a los abogados del mundo ”

Jerome ROTH

President

Président

Presidente

Paris, June 16, 2020

For the attention of the UIA individual and bar association members

Dear UIA Member, Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Along with the undersigned members of the United States National Committee of the UIA, I am addressing this letter to our fellow UIA individual and bar association members around the world.

Our country, the United States, is going through an extraordinarily difficult time.

As many of you know, a few weeks ago a white police officer in the State of Minnesota killed an unarmed Black man, George Floyd, by kneeling on his neck for over 8 minutes as three fellow officers stood by and as the man pleaded that he could not breathe. The incident was filmed, and the video clip is horrific. The police officers have been arrested and will be tried according to the law. But the brutality of the incident has given rise to nationwide soul-searching.

The killing follows other instances in which unarmed Black men and women in the United States have been killed by police officers. And it comes at a time when our Black communities are bearing the worst consequences of the COVID pandemic and of the associated financial turmoil.

More broadly, Black and other minority Americans continue to suffer from the systemic racism that permeates our national life, from inferior housing, education and health care, to reduced employment opportunities and salaries, to wealth disparities and voter suppression. The impact of our national history, including centuries of slavery, segregation and legally-sanctioned discrimination, persists in the injustices that occur today.

Over the past few weeks since the killing, the anguish and exhaustion of our fellow Black Americans has been palpable. Protests across the country and across the world, involving people of all races, ages and backgrounds, reflect a renewed determination to confront the situation and – for once – to work to rectify it. The time has come for real, lasting change.

I have spoken out often as President of UIA about the Rule of Law. Along with IROL, the UIA Institute for the Rule of Law, I have been vocal in objecting wherever in the world we have seen the Rule of Law endangered, lawyers persecuted, and human rights violated. But the Rule of Law for each of us must start at home. We want to be clear: the killing of George Floyd violates the Rule of Law. He received no due process. He received no even application of fairly promulgated laws. He was brought before no independent judge. He had access to no independent lawyer. He was afforded no protection of his human rights. We denounce those transgressions forcefully and unambiguously. We cannot ask other countries to live up to fundamental principles if we do not demand the same of our own country. We must take action.

A number of us in the UIA-US delegation have agreed to work together to help find solutions which we will be sharing with you. They range from recommending changes to existing police practices to identifying ways to root out racism, implicit bias and unequal treatment in all aspects of our society, including in our legal profession.

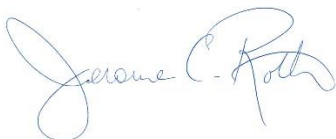
When I became UIA President in Luxembourg last October, I promised during our closing ceremony that I would focus on two questions during my term: What is the role of the lawyer in the face of injustice? What is the role of law associations like ours? For the US lawyers signing this letter, the time to answer those pressing questions with action is now.

As UIA lawyers, we have an important role to play. Lawyers have special access to power, we have a unique opportunity to make our voices heard, and we have a national and international network which, when it works together, can accomplish more than any of us individually.

We ask you, our fellow UIA members, to join us in our mission to breathe new life into our long-standing UIA values: respect for diversity, collegiality and friendship, exchange of ideas across communities, and protection of the Rule of Law. We want to understand how racism impacts your countries. What steps can be taken to combat racism everywhere it exists? What advice do you have and what help do you need? How do you think lawyers acting together help bring about lasting change?

Please feel free to reach out with your ideas to me personally or to other members listed below. We are committed to working closely with our UIA colleagues, to taking advantage of the opportunities UIA offers us, and to Bringing Together the World's Lawyers in order to eliminate the stain of racism wherever it exists, including in the legal profession we all cherish.

Thank you,



Jerome C. Roth
President, UIA

Additional signatories from the UIA-US Delegation:

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