

THE NANTES BAR ASSOCIATION'S REFUGE PROGRAM

Refuge program and respite scheme for threatened lawyers

Building on a strong tradition of honouring and supporting lawyers which have been prosecuted, tried, convicted or murdered on the grounds that they practise their profession, the Nantes Bar expresses its support for lawyers under threat around the world through the establishment of a Refuge and respite program for lawyers.

PRESENTATION

The Nantes Bar has made a commitment to take concrete action to provide fellow lawyers with help and protection. The REFUGE program consists of offering a solution for temporary accommodation in a safe place for lawyers who are threatened in their professional activity or who face disbarment measures and ethical sanctions unfairly imposed because of the nature of the cases they are involved with.

The **REFUGE-NANTES** program echoes the « Programme Répit » set up by the Paris Bar.

OBJECTIVES

This program aims to offer beneficiary lawyers the opportunity to move away from their countries for a limited period of time in order to flee a threatening environment and to protect them from immediate danger. The objective of the program is to allow a time and a safe place for these lawyers to work, rest, and possibly organize a safer future without being the object of immediate threats.

DETAILS

The welcoming of the selected lawyers is planned for a limited period. The program aims to ensure that they are able to benefit from a temporary respite but cannot offer permanent asylum.

The program is intended to cover the entire financing and organisation of the stay of the beneficiary or beneficiaries (including their family members and/or dependents who are also threatened). These costs include:

- travel expenses (from their country to Nantes),
- housing,
- living costs,
- transport costs in Nantes,
- interpreter,
- civil liability insurance, if necessary, etc.

BENEFICIARIES / CRITERIA AND SELECTION PROCESS

The program is open to all lawyers threatened in the context of their professional activities and the cases they handle such as the defense of political opponents, journalists, those who face the death penalty, indigenous populations, LGBT people, religious minorities, or involving their actions against corruption, torture, environmental threats, etc.

The selection of beneficiaries is made according to previously defined criteria and takes into account in particular the intensity and imminence of the threats.

The criteria taken into account for the study of each application are as follows:

- **Identity:** The request concerns a lawyer who is the subject of threats and/or violence combined with violations of the guarantees afforded to lawyers as described in the Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers adopted by the Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, held in Havana, Cuba, from 27 August to 7 September 1990.
- **Evaluation of the risks encountered:** The nature of the risks faced by the lawyer is detailed: is the lawyer subjected to intimidation, persecution, threats, attacks, harassment, arrests, blacklisting, etc.? The existence of these risks must be proven and their links with professional practice demonstrated.
- **Needs:** The applicant needs help in order to be temporarily relocated.

SUPPORT

The lawyers welcomed will be able to benefit from support in order to be able to continue working.

Nantes Bar association is involved in this operation, in cooperation with other French bars, lawyers institutions and local authorities to guarantee the efficiency and effectiveness of the host of lawyers.