





# Contents

3	Foreword by LAW's Executive Director
4	A message from a Rohingya survivor advocate
5	A message from LAW's Board – Ingrid Gubbay
6	About LAW
7	At a glance: 2022 in numbers
8	<b>Section 1 / Secure justice with and for victims and survivors</b>
8	Spotlight: landmark human rights case filed against Ethiopia
9	African Commission Case Timeline
10	2022 Highlights – Strategic Litigation
12	Voices for change
13	<b>Section 2 / Amplify survivors and communities' voices to advance justice</b>
14	Spotlight: The silent crisis: discrimination and abuse against the LGBTQI+ community in Lebanon
15	2022 Highlights – Advocacy & Policy
18	Voices for change
19	<b>Section 3 / Improve legal aid and representation &amp; strengthen legal frameworks</b>
20	2022 Highlights – Capacity Strengthening and Technical Support
22	Thanking our Donors
22	Financials
23	Thanking our Partners, LAW's Board and Committee members, and our Staff
24	Marking 10 years of fighting for victims and survivors



*Photo: Mohammad Ponir Hossain / Rohingya refugee women hold placards as they take part in a protest at the Kutupalong refugee camp to mark the one-year anniversary of their exodus in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.*

# Foreword

I am incredibly proud to introduce LAW's new Annual Report. Once again, thanks to the dedication and passion of our staff, partners, but most importantly, the courage and determination of victims and survivors, LAW has continued to make strides towards delivering justice, putting an end to impunity and establishing the legal and policy frameworks that are needed to prevent and redress human rights violations and abuses in conflict and fragile settings.

Challenges remain, but our collective efforts, our commitment to serve and empower victims and survivors, and our unique approach, mean that we were able to achieve successes for women, men, children, and LGBTQI+ individuals, no matter how difficult in today's environment.

Every victim and survivor of human rights violations deserves access to justice. In 2022, LAW worked, undeterred, with incredibly brave and resilient people in Ethiopia, Lebanon, South Sudan, Somalia, Bangladesh, Syria, and Sri Lanka to hold States and individuals accountable and turn promises and declarations into action. 2022 was a year of "landmarks" and "milestones" for LAW.

These include:

- With our partners the Pan-African Lawyers Union and Debevoise & Plimpton LLP, filing the first-ever complaint against the state of Ethiopia before the African Commission for serious and massive human rights violations against Tigrayan civilians. Our complaint resulted in the first provisional measures being ordered against Ethiopia.
- Hosting a survivor-led conference which concluded with the launch of a Plan of Action to combat sexual and gender-based violence in Syria.
- Publishing a report on systemic discrimination and abuse experienced by LGBTQI+ persons in Lebanon.
- Releasing the first ever investigative report on gendered crimes committed during the Lebanese Civil Wars.
- Opening three new legal aid clinics in South Sudan that provide victims and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence with legal assistance and representation.
- Increasing our external representation in global processes, including hosting and participating in side events at the Human Rights Council's 51st session, the UN General Assembly's 77th Session, and the 21st session of the International Criminal Court's Assembly of States Parties.
- Providing more than 19,000 people with legal aid, legal information and/or legal representation.



But LAW's successes are not ours alone. Victims and survivors are why we exist and why we challenge indifference, impunity, and inaction. Connected by suffering and trauma, and when silence is so very inviting, they rise to show us that surviving is just the beginning of a journey towards healing. We would also not be able to have operations in conflict and fragile settings and provide channels for victims and survivors to come forward and deliver essential legal aid and representation without our partners. Finally, we would not have our reach and impact without our many allies, internal and others, that support and elevate our agenda and vision.

That is why this year, we have asked survivors, partners, colleagues, and champions - our "Voices for Change" - to share their stories, their work, what they do to secure justice and accountability and why they do it. I am also extremely honoured that a Rohingya survivor who is also a member of the powerful Shanti Mohila (peace women) group in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, has accepted the invitation to write a message alongside mine.

In 2023, LAW will be celebrating its 10th anniversary. This year, we will reflect on our achievements, but most importantly we will strive to build innovative projects, co-create ground-breaking initiatives, form new influential partnerships and constituencies of support, including with the media and public figures, and step up our global engagement with like-minded organisations.

Finally, I want to thank everyone that has contributed to our work and achievements in 2022: LAW's staff and Board, our advisory committee, partners, donors and national and international organisations that make our work stronger, better, and more impactful.

*Antonia Mulvey*

**Antonia Mulvey**  
Founder and Executive Director,  
Legal Action Worldwide

## A message from a Rohingya survivor advocate

"When I fled to Bangladesh in 2017, **the journey was not only about crossing a border. I left my village, my people, my community, and everything I called home.** For years before 2017, I, along with other women in my community, lived with several restrictions to our freedom of movement – to our entire lives – almost every day. Work and education opportunities were limited for Rohingya. Every movement had to be calculated. Life was difficult, but we held on until we were, one day, forced to leave the country. **It took me a week to reach the refugee camps in Bangladesh. On the journey I was raped and subjected to sexual violence by members of the Myanmar military** who also targeted other women, regardless of their age, and who were trying to escape the country. **I have not slept in peace ever since.**

I had no hope or motivation in the first three years of camp life. A refugee is not only robbed of their human rights but sitting still in the camps can impact your mental health, your sense of self. I needed a platform to channel my energy. Then I met LAW in 2019, and from then on, I have been fighting to make Myanmar military's perpetrators of crimes accountable.

I became a member of Shanti Mohila, a Rohingya women's survivor group which delivers awareness raising and advocacy activities in the camps. **Working with other women champions, I lead changes in my own community and encourage Rohingya refugees' engagement in international justice processes,** such as the ongoing investigation of the International Criminal Court. Those processes are about us and we must be involved.

Knowledge brings empathy and creates connections. When we discuss the legal updates related to the Rohingya crisis, our crisis, **we share hope among ourselves. We are women leaders, and we stick together.** Myanmar military has targeted Rohingya women to break our morals, but we have not given up. Now, justice should ensure we return to our country, stronger and with full skills and capacity, so that we are not exposed to more vulnerability.

We suffered for way too long. It is unbearable to sit and do nothing. Working with LAW has enabled me – and other women like me – to strive to rebuild our lives, make changes in our communities, and participate in justice processes that are about us. **I do not know if there is light at the end of the tunnel, but now I at least know that the tunnel exists."**



## A message from LAW's Board

I am delighted to write this message. My involvement in LAW's work started eight years ago and in just a few years I have witnessed its growth under the leadership of its founder Antonia Mulvey. Her leadership, vision, and decades-long commitments to secure meaningful changes for victims and survivors have created a truly unique organisation driven by an amazing team she has built and grown exponentially over the past 10 years.

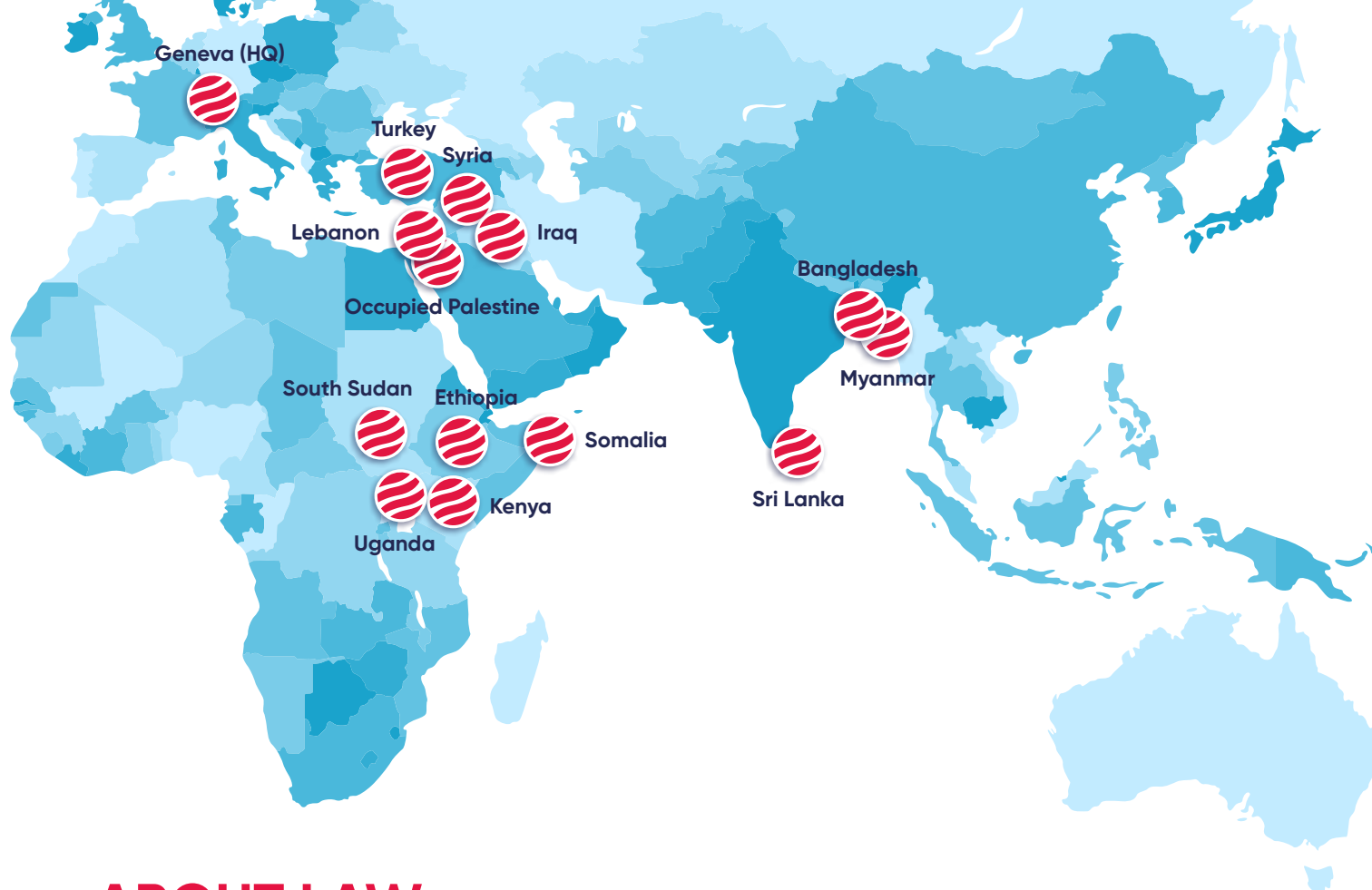
On the eve of its 10th anniversary, LAW has become a leader in its field, the only international human rights organisation with field operations in conflict-affected and fragile settings, and a uniquely positioned actor that puts victims and survivors of human rights violations at the heart of its work.

LAW has now over 90 staff and consultants, with programmes in 14 countries. In 2022, the organisation expanded its office in Geneva, where its headquarters are now based. This opens significant strategic and influencing opportunities to connect, build partnerships, and push victims and survivors' agenda for justice and accountability further and higher. I cannot wait to witness what this new phase of LAW's journey brings.

I want to thank LAW's staff and our partners for working relentlessly to prevent impunity, protecting victims and survivors, and empowering them to drive their fight for justice. I am also thankful to our donors for enabling us to grow and expand the reach and impact of our work.

Most of all, I want to thank the victims and survivors that trust us. We are privileged to be working with and supporting them. Without their views about their priorities, needs and expectations, we cannot deliver the truth and justice they want and deserve.

**Ingrid Gubbay, on behalf of LAW's Board**



## ABOUT LAW

### Who we are and how we work

**LAW is an independent non-profit organisation of lawyers and jurists. We work in fragile and conflict-affected contexts to improve access to justice and provide legal redress to victims and survivors of human rights violations and abuses. Our headquarters are in Geneva and we currently work in or on 14 countries.**

### LAW's approach is anchored in four principles:

- **Inclusiveness** – LAW applies an intersectional lens to the legal representation, support, and assistance that we provide to victims and survivors, who very often sit at the intersection of factors that makes them extremely vulnerable. By doing so, we aim to tackle the systemic and institutional roots of human rights violations and abuses. These include harmful gender and social norms, patriarchal societies, structural gender inequalities, and a culture of impunity that protects the most powerful.
- **Survivor-centred** – LAW empowers victims to become survivors and then advocates who can identify and speak out about their needs and demands, and voice what justice means to them. They can be agents of change for themselves and for others, such as their families and communities. We also support survivors in advocating for their access to and meaningful participation in local, national, regional, and international truth seeking and justice processes.
- **Locally-led** – Through staff and partners in country, we foster a locally-led approach to justice and accountability. We engage and work with local actors that have the power, influence, and mandates to lead or contribute to change, including community leaders, legal institutions and organisations, lawyers, justice, police and other groups in authorities and governments.
- **Gender equality and diversity focused** – LAW works with, represents, and advocates on behalf of LGBTQI+ individuals. We support them to engage and participate in national and international truth seeking investigations and mechanisms. We also build and disseminate the evidence on how conflict and fragility settings affect LGBTQI+ people, and barriers to them accessing support and services, as well as legal assistance and representation.



## Who we work with

We work with diverse constituencies of stakeholders, first and foremost survivors, including survivors' groups that have come together to collectively seek justice and accountability.

We work with national governments, regional and international institutions, legal and justice actors, authorities, civil society and human rights organisations, UN agencies, and donor governments. Our areas of collaboration and partnerships include: strategic litigation; legal aid and representation; capacity strengthening and technical advice; and policy and advocacy.

## At a glance: 2022 in numbers



# SECURE JUSTICE WITH AND FOR VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS

Using domestic, regional, and international mechanisms, LAW uses strategic litigation as a key tactic to achieve systemic changes in law and practice. We focus on challenging impunity and bringing perpetrators to justice. We also provide legal information, assistance and representation to individuals and communities to facilitate their access to justice and their engagement in processes that concern them.

In 2022, we continued to lead breakthrough cases on mass human rights violations and abuses against civilian populations and marginalised groups, such as migrant domestic workers (MDWs) and members of the LGBTQI+ community. We used high-level advocacy to push for greater commitments and action on our ground-breaking cases. Through our ongoing legal aid services, we also supported an increasing number of victims and survivors.

## Spotlight

### Landmark human rights case filed against Ethiopia

On 8 February 2022, in partnership with Debevoise & Plimpton LLP and the Pan-African Lawyers Union (PALU), we submitted a landmark complaint against Ethiopia on behalf of Tigrayan victims and survivors before the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (the "African Commission") for serious and massive human rights violations against Tigrayan civilians. This was the first time that the African Commission, whose role is to promote and protect human rights on the African continent, was requested to examine the conduct of Ethiopian forces in Tigray, including associated Eritrean military operations.

Between 385,000 and 600,000 civilians have reportedly been killed since November 2020. More than two million of Tigray's six million people have fled their homes and an estimated 60,000 Tigrayan civilians have sought refuge in Sudan.

The case outlines how Tigrayan civilians of all ages have been subjected to grave violations of human rights, as well as war crimes and crimes against humanity, including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), arbitrary detentions, indiscriminate attacks, extra-judicial killings, starvation, and torture. This landmark case is more critical than ever. It has received media coverage, allowing for a human tragedy that has become overshadowed by the Ukraine crisis to make the headlines.

On 14 October 2022, the African Commission announced its decision to take on the case. Importantly, the Commission ordered provisional measures urging Ethiopia to cease all attacks on civilians and ensure humanitarian access in Tigray, two of the critical demands of LAW's clients. This decision is significant for Tigrayans we represent and others who were subject to systemic, horrific crimes and have been purposively starved and deprived from life-saving services.

The case is also critically important as the Peace Agreement signed on 2 November 2022 between the Federal Government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) fails to set out the road to justice and accountability for the crimes and human rights violations committed by Ethiopia and its associated forces. Victims, survivors, and their communities are left wondering whether this agreement will pave the way for impunity, rather than justice. This case is one of the available pathways to state responsibility for its massive and systemic human rights violations and international crimes committed against Tigrayan civilians.



## Spotlight: African Commission Case Timeline

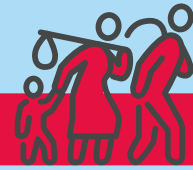
2020

4 November



Conflict breaks out between the Ethiopian government and its associated forces, and the TPLF and the Tigrayan Defence Forces (TDF) following the September regional elections in Tigray.

14 November



10 days of conflict leads to tens of thousands Tigrayans fleeing into Sudan, and describing the atrocities committed in Tigray. The UN warns of possible war crimes in Tigray.

March



The ceasefire that was in place since 2021 is broken and hostilities resume in Tigray. De-facto blockade leads to a catastrophic deterioration of the humanitarian situation and increased human rights violations are reported.

8 February



LAW and its partners, Debevoise & Plimpton LLP and PALU file a complaint before the African Commission on behalf of Tigrayan victims and survivors of the conflict, against Ethiopia.

2022

2022

14 October



The African Commission confirms its decision to be seized of the complaint. It also orders emergency provisional measures against Ethiopia, including the cessation of alleged attacks on civilians and the lifting of the humanitarian blockade in Tigray.

2 November



The Ethiopian Government and the TPLF sign a peace agreement in Pretoria, South Africa. Both parties agree to cease hostilities and the Ethiopian Government commits to restoring law and order, and to allow humanitarian aid into the region of Tigray.

2022

13 December



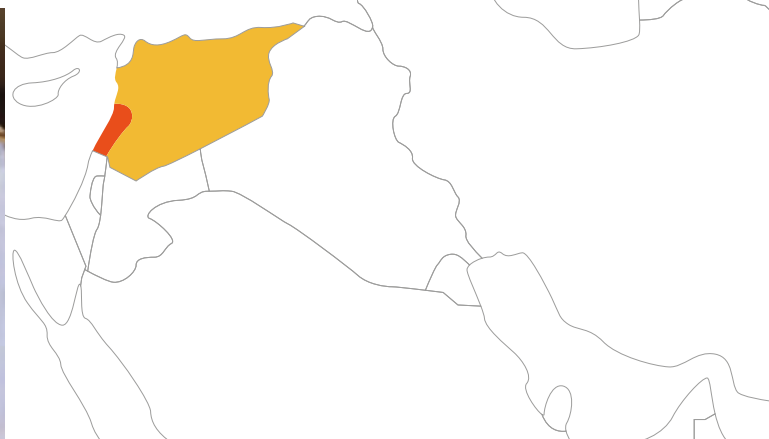
LAW and its partners file their submission on the merits and admissibility of the case before the African Commission. The submission, including witness evidence from LAW's clients, details the horrific scale of violations and international crimes committed in Tigray. The government of Ethiopia was required to respond by the 29th of March 2023.



## Lebanon

We maintained our legal representation in ground-breaking cases that are seeking to set legal precedents and end systemic discrimination and abuse.

- Two years after filing, the first criminal case of slavery and slave trade continued to progress, paving the way towards challenging the exploitative and abusive migration-sponsorship “Kafala” system that excludes MDWs from Lebanese labour law, leaving them without any rights or legal protection. In November 2020, LAW started representing “MH”, an Ethiopian woman who came to Lebanon in 2011 and was enslaved for nearly a decade in Beirut. MH is suing her former employer and recruiter for crimes of slavery, slave trading, trafficking, forced labour, deprivation of liberty, racial discrimination, gender discrimination, and torture.
- LAW also successfully prevented a gay man from going to jail for his sexual orientation, showcasing another important legal victory for LGBTQI+ rights. The case concerned a 29-year-old Lebanese male who enlisted in the Lebanese Army and had a consensual sexual relationship with another man during service. He was subsequently charged for having sexual intercourse “against nature” under Lebanon’s penal code. A military judge initially sentenced him to a month of imprisonment. In March 2022, LAW appealed the judge’s ruling which was then overturned. The prison sentence was annulled and the defendant was issued with a fine of LBP 300,000/around US\$ 20.



## Syria

As part of our strategic litigation work on Syrian war crimes, we convened a thought-provoking panel discussion at the 21st Assembly of States Parties to the International Criminal Court (ICC) Statute in The Hague. The December event specifically focused on transboundary crimes against Belarusian, Uighur, and Syrian victims. The discussions used the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber’s 2018 decision granting jurisdiction for cross-border crimes where one element took place on the territory of a state party (the situation of Bangladesh/Myanmar), to argue for the opening of preliminary examinations in state parties where cross-border crimes impacted Syrian, Uighur, and Belarussian survivors.

The event was co-hosted by The Netherlands and gathered 46 delegates who joined a panel of experts, calling for the Office of the Prosecutor to open a preliminary examination in Jordan, following several requests, including a communication filed by LAW on behalf of 20 Syrian survivors deported into Jordan.



## Bangladesh/ Myanmar

**LAW continued to provide legal representation and assistance to over 300 Rohingya refugees** currently living in the camps in Cox's Bazar in relation to international legal proceedings seeking justice and accountability for serious crimes experienced in Myanmar. We coordinated with The Gambia legal team in the case before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the application of the Genocide Convention.

We also began to support cases using the principle of universal jurisdiction to bring senior Myanmar military generals and others to justice for genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. In 2022, we represented one of the 16 individual complainants who have filed a criminal complaint in Germany by Fortify Rights. We worked closely with the Argentinian legal team on the ongoing universal jurisdiction case filed in Argentina in 2019 to ensure the meaningful and secure representation of Rohingya's witnesses and survivors displaced from Myanmar during the 2016 and 2017 'clearance operations.'

**In Indonesia, we coordinated with the Indonesian legal team representing petitioners,** requesting changes to domestic legislation on Indonesia's Human Rights Court to permit the filing of cases by foreigners and allow for an investigation of the Myanmar military.





# VOICES FOR CHANGE

## **Nick Leddy, LAW's Head of Litigation**

### **Why have you decided to work in international criminal law (ICL)?**

I decided to work in ICL over twenty years ago because I wanted a more just world. In early 2002, while studying in the Netherlands, I learned about the UN ad hoc tribunals for Rwanda and Yugoslavia, and the Rome Statute, which was on the cusp of entering into force. Having witnessed the 9/11 attacks from my Brooklyn rooftop, I was committed to finding justice for mass atrocities through the rule of law, and not the use of force. As a queer man, I also wanted to use my experience to help as many survivors as possible who experienced systemic and gender-based violence.

### **What made you want to join LAW?**

Having been a prosecutor for over 13 years, first in New York City, and then at the ICC in The Hague, I was ready for a new challenge. LAW's expertise in SGBV and use of a trauma-informed approach to lawyering was important to me personally and professionally. The world's attention being focused on war crimes in Ukraine, LAW's presence in other conflict-affected areas provided an opportunity to impact communities in need. Being Head of Litigation at LAW presented the right balance of work in ICL and human rights law while growing my experience managing teams of lawyers around the world on a wide variety of interesting cases.

### **How is your role supporting victims and survivors' access and secure justice?**

As Head of Litigation, the way I support victims and survivors varies from case to case, but in essence, I manage our cases representing them before domestic, regional, and international courts. This can happen in the form of interviewing survivors, drafting their witness statements, editing court filings, or supervising others doing the same – whether for survivors from Tigray, Lebanon, Syria, or Bangladesh. We are very busy at LAW! I just returned from Uganda and South Sudan where I was interviewing survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. It all starts with listening to them and their needs.

## **Centre for Inclusive Governance, Peace and Justice (CIGPJ), LAW's Partner in South Sudan**

### **How is your organisation working to secure justice and accountability?**

We support and coordinate survivors' networks in South Sudan at the sub-national levels, building their capacity to engage in transitional justice processes and advocate for increased participation of women in the implementation of South Sudan's peace and justice agenda with the government, including the Ministry of justice. With CIGPJ's support, women survivors have been able to participate in parliamentary hearings. They also called for the government to expedite the establishment of the Hybrid Court for South Sudan and the inclusion of a survivor-centred approach to the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing, as well as reparation and trauma awareness. Some survivors met with the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and wrote her letter demanding accountability and an end to impunity for SGBV.

### **How have you helped survivors fight for justice?**

In addition to working to ensure that survivors of conflict-related sexual violence have a voice in transitional justice processes, we provide orientation and mentorship programmes and psychosocial awareness. We help them connect and break the silence and start speaking up. Safe spaces are provided in the office to have their meetings with the psychosocial team and gender officers.



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## AMPLIFY SURVIVORS AND COMMUNITY VOICES AND SUPPORT THEIR ENGAGEMENT TO ADVANCE JUSTICE

Through advocacy at all levels, supported by research and policy analysis, we increase decision and policy makers' awareness and understanding of victims and survivors' fight for justice and accountability. We do so by amplifying their demands and priorities, and by calling for increased tangible actions to ensure their access to justice.

In 2022, we generated new evidence on the discrimination, abuses and human rights violations committed against marginalised groups, including LGBTQI+ communities in Lebanon and Bangladesh, and women survivors of SGBV in Lebanon and Somalia. We also worked with victims and survivors of the Beirut explosion, of Myanmar's 2016 and 2017 'clearance operations', and of the Syrian war, ensuring that their stories and calls would reach human rights institutions and international justice mechanisms.

## Spotlight

# The Silent Crisis: discrimination and abuse against the LGBTQI+ community in Lebanon

As part of its advocacy and broader legal work on gender diversity, LAW released “Hidden Identities, Broken Lives and No Access to Justice” in October. The report highlights the findings from a qualitative piece of research carried out with **157 members of the LGBTQI+ community**, including refugees, undocumented people, and Lebanese citizens, and representatives from the legal sector and LGBTQI+ organisations. **The report received widespread media attention in Lebanon, providing an important platform for sharing and amplifying the voices of LGBTQI+ individuals.**

**“Even if people are not explicitly discriminated, LGBTQI+ individuals are always suffering emotionally. One look is enough to be discriminated against.”**

*(Research Participant)*

The research aimed to better understand LGBTQI+ individuals’ experiences of discrimination and abuse across societal settings within Lebanon and their impacts on their mental well-being and livelihoods. It also explored the challenges LGBTQI+ people face in accessing legal support and justice.

Our findings revealed an alarming picture of lives that are virtually erased by daily discrimination and abuse at home and in public settings. We also found that COVID-19 and the Beirut Port explosion have further exacerbated LGBTQI+ individuals’ existing vulnerabilities, marginalisation, and discrimination.

**“You must go through many rejections until you find anything. You don’t get to choose an industry or preference because you are lucky if you find any job to start with.”**

*(Research Participant)*



The study further exposed the mental health toll that daily discrimination and abuse has on LGBTQI+ individuals who have to hide their identity and practice self-censorship for fear of being discriminated against. Losing their sense of self leads to social isolation, depression, and suicidal behaviour.

**“My only fear is that I will fail to commit suicide and the health consequences that may result may make me need the help of others. If I find a guaranteed method other than the method of taking a large amount of medicine, I will do it without hesitation.”**

*(Online survey respondent)*

The report sets out key recommendations aimed at the Government of Lebanon, LGBTQI+ and human rights organisations, legal professional bodies, judiciary actors, and the media. It is an important tool to amplify LGBTQI+ individuals’ needs and demands to policy makers, legal actors and service providers in the country.

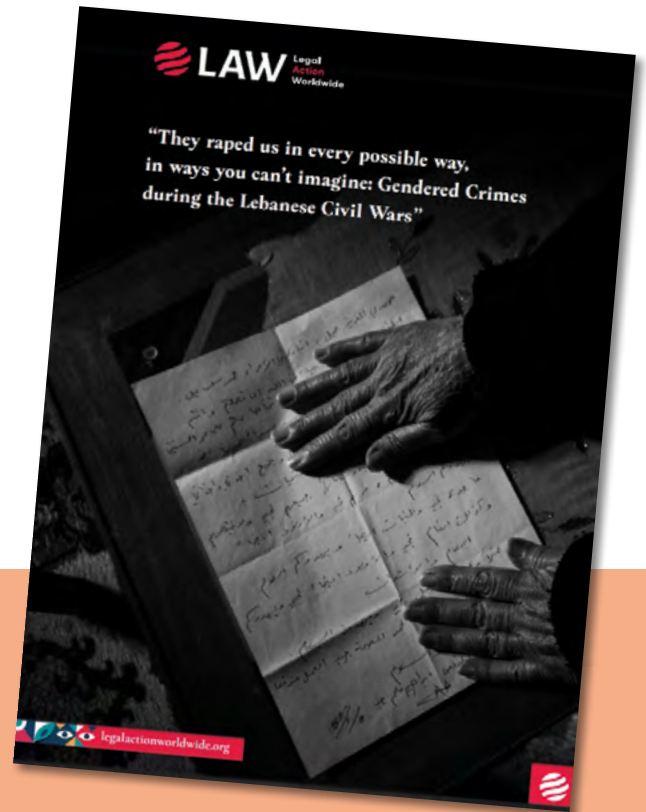


## Lebanon

For more than two years, LAW has been working with 120 survivors, victims, and families of those injured and killed in the Beirut Port explosion of 4 August 2020.

The explosion killed more than 200 people, including children, injured 7,000 people and left 150 people disabled.

- In March, supported by LAW, the victims, survivors and family members of those killed and injured sent a **letter to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights** requesting the dispatch of investigators to probe human rights violations related to the explosion, in particular the violation of the fundamental right to life, and the repeated attempts by the Government of Lebanon to impede and undermine the domestic investigation.
- **Parents of children who died in the Beirut port explosion – Mireille Khoury, mother of 15-year-old Elias and Sarah Copland, mother of 2-year old Isaac – were also given a platform to share their two-year journey to learn the truth about the explosion and hold those responsible accountable during LAW’s online panel discussion on “Truth, Accountability and Rule of Law: Foundations for a new Lebanon” that took place in April. All panellists and speakers emphasised the need to break the country’s cycle of impunity by ascertaining the truth, thereby building the foundation of a new Lebanon.**
- **Mireille Khoury and Karlen Hitti Karam, wife, sister, and cousin of three firefighters who died when responding to the explosion spoke during LAW’s online panel event of September 2022, questioning whether justice would ever be delivered given the ongoing challenges and lack of will from the Lebanese authorities to support the domestic investigation.**
- On 4 August 2022, LAW sent **47 letters – one to each of the UN Human Rights Council’s member states – on behalf of the victims, survivors, and family members of those killed.** The letter specifically requested the Council to establish an independent and impartial fact-finding mission. In a separate letter, LAW, alongside 10 other human rights and civil society organisations, joined the survivors’ call on the Human Rights Council to act.



In June, LAW released the first preliminary investigation into the nature and patterns of gendered crimes committed by armed parties during the Lebanese civil wars (1975-1990).

**"My husband was abducted during a massacre. After Bashir Gemayel's assassination, I saw five girls hanging from trees. They were from the same family. This was in a small forest in Beirut. They were raped and then killed and thrown on trees."**

*(63-year-old woman, victim)*

This report sets out for the first time the shocking truth of gendered crimes against women and girls during the Lebanese Civil Wars 1975-1990. Our preliminary investigation found that state actors, state and non-state aligned militias perpetrated SGBV on a significant scale including rape, gang rape, mass rape, genital mutilation, sexualized torture, killings of women and girls after rape and abductions.

Decades of collective amnesia, 'Lebanese resilience' and 'shaming of victims' has silenced victims and survivors. These women and girls (and family members who witnessed these crimes) are double victims – first the sexual violence inflicted upon them and then the total and utter failure to hold individuals and state agents accountable for these grave violations or to even acknowledge what has happened.

## Bangladesh/Myanmar

In 2022, LAW continued to advocate for and promote the meaningful participation of Rohingya victims and survivors of the 2016 and 2017 ‘clearance operations’ who have fled to Bangladesh in international justice processes. We also elevated their demands for justice and for a safe and dignified return to their country.

In February, 807 Rohingya survivors of genocide living in Cox’s Bazar submitted a letter to the President of the ICJ. They expressed fear and outrage that Myanmar military may be recognised as the legitimate representative of Myanmar in proceedings before the Court and voiced their despair to “have been left with nothing but loss, pain and suffering”. Their plea was echoed and supported by a joint letter from LAW, Fortify Rights and The Myanmar Accountability Project, in which the organisations asserted that any recognition of the junta by the ICJ would call into question the ability of the Court to independently and impartially address inter-state dispute, undermining its role as the principal judicial organ of the UN.

In August, on Rohingya Genocide Remembrance Day, we amplified the reach of survivors’ voices by delivering a public campaign to mark the fifth-year mark since the ‘clearance operations’ against the Rohingya, with video messages from Rohingya survivor advocates. We also pursued our advocacy with relevant member states to increase international pressure on Myanmar to meaningfully engage in The Gambia v. Myanmar case, and to reiterate their commitment to securing a long-term solution to the Rohingya crisis.

We stepped up our engagement with Rohingya men and third-gender people (“hijra”) living in Cox’s Bazar, working with them to generate evidence on their experiences of SGBV in Myanmar and in the camps. Our report “They Took Me To A Dark Place” was launched in Bangladesh in January. It is the product of a survivor-centred study conducted with 61 Rohingya men and hijra SGBV survivors, and interviews with service providers operating in Cox’s Bazar. Our research found staggering levels of SGBV against hijra in Myanmar and in Bangladesh where they now live, as well as marked levels of SGBV against men in Myanmar. It also highlighted massive underreporting of SGBV, leading to critical gaps in the provision of services that meet survivors’ needs. Finally it revealed survivors’ disheartening perception of justice as something unattainable. As a result, survivors do not seek assistance for the horrible gendered crimes which they have been subjected to. The findings and recommendations from the report have been widely disseminated and shared with decision makers and programme implementers in Cox’s Bazar to initiate a dialogue on how to better meet the needs and priorities of survivors and ensure their participation in planning, delivery, and evaluation.

Through high-level events, LAW channelled and amplified Rohingya survivors’ demands and wishes.

- In March, at a panel event co-hosted by LAW and the Embassy of Bangladesh, we launched an urgent Call for Justice. **Yousuf Ali, a representative of the Rohingya community advocates in the camps in Cox’s Bazar and one of LAW’s clients, delivered a powerful video message** warning the audience that without justice, genocide will happen time and time again and crimes against the Rohingya will be repeated. All panellists underscored the importance of ensuring that survivors’ voices are heard throughout justice proceedings, and the need to do more to hold perpetrators accountable, including through the establishment of an ad hoc tribunal empowered to look at crimes taking place inside Myanmar.
- In September, a follow-up panel discussion on the Rohingya community’s aspiration to return to their homeland with their rights and security, concluded with a set of recommendations for member states, civil society and international institutions. They include removing perpetrators of international crimes from power; repealing discriminatory citizenship laws, security through return of land; ensuring the Rohingya population can actively and meaningfully participate in discussions around repatriation; and supporting justice and accountability efforts by all stakeholders.
- LAW also supported its Rohingya clients and voiced their demands at an official side-event to the 77th Session of the UN General Assembly in New York which was hosted by the government of Bangladesh. During the meeting, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh addressed the Rohingya refugee crisis, alongside the head of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and the International Organization for Migration.

In 2022, our fantastic network of Survivor Advocates was able to reach a total of 15,384 Rohingya through community awareness sessions in the camps. LAW has been working with Survivor Advocates since 2018, building their skills and knowledge on critical issues affecting Rohingya, including SGBV, and their understanding of ongoing international justice processes which they can engage in. The Survivor Advocates carry the stories and experiences of those who cannot, or do not wish to speak out and in doing so, ensure that the collective voices of Rohingya’s refugees are heard in processes that directly concern them.

## Somalia

"I was once a victim but now I feel strong and powerful. At first I was afraid of reporting him because I thought the system would side with him, no matter what I said, but in the end, justice was on my side. He was arrested and sentenced to five years in prison, and is still serving his jail term as I am speaking to you now. You don't have to remain silent when such things happen, you should report and seek legal assistance from the paralegals who are always here to help you."

*(Hawa, Community Champion)*

In 2022, LAW continued to support victims, survivors and the local community to lead their own fight against GBV in Somalia, with the establishment of four Survivor Support Groups in IDP camps around Mogadishu. One of the Survivor Support Groups, or Iskaashato-Haween ('Women's Cooperative') is led by 16 female survivors and provides a safe space for survivors to talk and to support each other through the difficulties of seeking help, including legal aid. It works with a group of Community Champions, known locally as Hiil-Haween ('Helping Women') to encourage survivors to discuss their experiences and to counter cultural stigma and the pressures that can be exerted on victims by family and the community. Community Champions are female survivors living in IDP camps who provide door-to-door SGBV awareness raising and information to other survivors, fostering change at the grass roots level.

LAW supports and provides training to the Community Champions, to advance their capacities in different skills, including advocacy, human rights, constitutional rights and the formal justice system. In August, LAW held a two-day advocacy training with 20 women community champions, providing participants with skills and tools that they can use to advocate more strategically on increasing access to justice for GBV survivors in Mogadishu. The workshop also reinforced the critical role of survivors as advocates – not only to challenge impunity on GBV but to speak out on behalf of communities and people that are not able to voice their demands.

In October 2022, LAW launched a new policy report, *An Agenda for Action to End Sexual and Gender Based Violence: Somalia's Forgotten Women, Girls, and Children*. The report sets out a set of recommendations aimed at the Government of Somalia, donors and NGOs towards delivering meaningful changes for women and girls. The launch took place at a side event to the Human Rights Council 50th session and was cosponsored by the

Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations, and the UK Mission to the United Nations in Geneva. The panellists - the Senior Human Rights and Gender Advisor to the Government of Somalia's Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, the Independent Expert on the Situation of Human Rights in Somalia; the Founder of the Ifrah Foundation and Anti-FGM activist, and Save the Children Somalia's Equality, Gender Based Violence, and Social Inclusion Senior Specialist – came together to support LAW's Agenda for Action, amplifying our calls for increased commitments and tangible steps to prevent and address GBV against women and girls in Somalia.



## Syria

LAW's second survivor-centred conference took place in October in Paris.

The conference was created in response to Syrian civil society's calls for dedicated platforms to explore issues pertaining to the conflict. The 2022 conference focused on the needs of SGBV survivors and the preparation of a Plan of Action to fight SGBV in the Syrian crisis. LAW was joined by 44 Syrian survivors and their advocates

from 26 civil society organisations, human rights and women's rights organisations, survivors' groups, and detainee networks, operating across the Middle East and Europe. Representatives of the Commission of Inquiry on Syria and the International, the Impartial and Independent Mechanism for Syria also attended. Clear recommendations emerged from the presentations and exchanges, including the need for parallel justice initiatives to combat impunity for SGBV.







# VOICES FOR CHANGE

## **Yousuf Ali, Rohingya survivor advocate**

### **Can you tell us about your story?**

I came to Bangladesh in September 2017. In Myanmar, I was the chairman at a Police Station for 15 years. I was also a teacher and owned a small business. In 2016, the Myanmar Government and military began imposing restrictions on us. We could not go to the mosque, market, or any places without permission. We experienced ethnic and religious persecution in Myanmar for decades, and in 2017 the military started the 'clearance operations'. We had no choice but to flee to Bangladesh. I arrived in Kutupalong camp on 14 September 2017. With the support from some Rohingya community members, I started giving interviews to different organisations and media to raise awareness of the atrocities committed against us and the Rohingya people still in Myanmar. In 2018, I met with some members from Shanti Mohila and a representative from LAW to discuss justice and the political complications for our return to Myanmar.

### **How are you trying to get justice?**

I became a survivor advocate to get justice. Along with other male survivor advocates, I identify people who survived physical torture, rape and other atrocities in Myanmar and I speak to them about international justice processes that they can engage in. If they wish to do so, I put them in touch with LAW, so that their statements can be used in different ongoing legal cases. My role is then to run awareness sessions to inform survivors about how the cases are progressing. I also speak at LAW's advocacy events where international justice for the Rohingya and our safe and voluntary return to Myanmar are discussed. In December 2019, I was able to travel to The Hague with two other survivor advocates to attend the ICJ's hearings on provisional measures in the case between The Gambia and Myanmar on the application of the Genocide Convention. Being there was important to show that we, the Rohingya, want justice and want to be present in court proceedings that concern us.

## **Mireille Khoury, mother of Elias, a victim of the Beirut port explosion**

### **Can you tell us about you?**

I am a Lebanese woman who lost her son in the Beirut Port Explosion of August 2020. My daughter was injured and is still having surgeries. Some of her scars will remain for life. I was injured as well. My house was destroyed. I used to live about 200 meters away from the port.

### **How are you trying to get justice?**

Since the beginning, I anticipated that the national investigation would be blocked, and it is what happened. The national investigation is currently dormant. Even if it resumes, we are not sure that it will continue and that those responsible will be held accountable. I speak out and advocate for my son, for the other innocent people who have lost their lives and the thousands like my daughter who have been injured. If our demands are not being heard, I do not think justice will ever be a reality in Lebanon.

I have been working with LAW since autumn 2020, after being introduced to Antonia Mulvey, alongside others who have been directly affected by the explosion, including people like me who has lost a child. LAW's work has been a powerful advocacy platform for us because they put us at the centre of everything they do. They support us in reaching out to those who have the power to help, and to ensure justice is finally served. Internationally, we have been advocating to the Human Rights Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for the establishment of an independent investigation into the explosion.

We are not giving up. We will not give up.

3 /

## IMPROVE LEGAL AID AND REPRESENTATION & STRENGTHEN LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

LAW provides technical assistance, strategic advice and training to legal, justice and civil society actors, strengthening their ability to protect, assist, and represent victims and survivors.

2022 saw major advances for victims and survivors' ability to access legal aid and representation thanks to increased resources and training for legal professionals in several countries, resulting in an increase in the number of people supported.

### Spotlight



Photo: LAW / Justice Confidence Centre in Wau.

## Increased access to legal aid and representation for victims and survivors in South Sudan

LAW secured important progress for victims and survivors, including children, through the opening of new legal aid clinics.

In April LAW and its partner, the South Sudan Law Society, opened three legal aid clinics - "Justice Confidence Centres" - in Juba, Wau and Malakal - representing a significant step towards ensuring widespread and standardised provision of legal aid to vulnerable individuals in the country. Each clinic has at least one lawyer and one legal officer (two in Malakal) who provide legal information, assistance and representation to victims and survivors of SGBV and discrimination.

The lawyers and legal officers working in the Justice Confidence Centres received intensive technical support through two workshops on legal aid. The first training was held in March and considered international standards for legal aid provisions, South Sudanese criminal law in the context of SGBV, LAW's legal aid guidelines, SGBV case management, psychological first aid, and the Standard Operating Procedures of the Justice Confidence Centres. In September, the same participants discussed their experiences and the challenges they face in their daily work.

The Justice Confidence Centres started operating in April/May 2022 and have so far provided legal aid in 94 cases of SGBV and discrimination, including 34 cases involving children.

## Somalia

LAW's community paralegals who have been working with LAW for six years, continued to conduct legal information and awareness sessions on a weekly basis in the IDP camps. In 2022 alone, 2127 people attended the legal awareness sessions, and LAW's community paralegals received 137 complaints from victims and survivors, all women.

*Photo: LAW / LAW's community paralegals providing legal awareness sessions to Somali's IDPs*



## Syria

We delivered capacity building training to Syrian lawyers and human rights defenders, focusing on how to better support and involve survivors in justice processes and engage with their communities on important issues.

- **LAW strengthened the skills of 39 Syrian lawyers and human rights defenders on strategic litigation.** The trainings were held in Jordan, Turkey, and Iraq to enhance the participants' understanding of how the law can be used to pursue justice goals and upskill their approach to evidence collection when gathering statements from victims and witnesses. The emphasis of the learning was on survivor-centred, gender-sensitive, and trauma-informed methodologies. Based on the positive feedback received and demands from several participants, **LAW is now looking to conduct more trainings on specific lawyering skills with new cohorts of lawyers in the region.**
- **Syrian lawyers also received 130 days of on-the-job mentoring** by assisting LAW's legal team to develop and implement tailored justice strategies with survivors. For example, they assisted in client and case identification and basic information collection as part of an initial "pre-screening" process. The mentoring programme also included supporting lawyers in the development of inclusive approaches to legal service provision, improving their knowledge and attitudes to better support women and minority groups such as LGBTQI+ individuals. **The mentoring programme is expected to have far-reaching impacts for Syrian lawyers and the communities they serve.**



*Photo: LAW / Training on online violence*

## Sri Lanka

2022 saw the conclusion of LAW's unique Technology for Gender Justice pilot project – the first to document and analyse online gendered violence in Sri Lanka. We implemented the two-phased project in partnership with Sri Lankan organisations - Hashtag Generation and the Women and Media Collective - and Canadian organisations - the Sentinel Project and Hatebase. In Phase 1 (documenting and analysing online gendered violence and misinformation), we found that online sexual harassment and the non-consensual sharing of private images ("revenge porn") represent the most prevalent forms of online gendered attacks in Sri Lanka.

Phase 2 consisted of increasing human rights defenders' knowledge of digital security practices. Sri Lankan women and young people were trained on how to use specific tools to better prevent and respond to online gendered violence and prevent the spread of misinformation. We also launched social media campaigns to spread awareness of these issues, reaching thousands of social media users with anti-hate speech messages. **LAW Sri Lanka plans to build on the success of this project and grow its relationship with Sri Lankan and international civil society groups and activists, to expand its efforts to monitor and combat online hate speech and misinformation.**



# VOICES FOR CHANGE

## EQUAL GROUND, LAW Sri Lanka's partner

### How is your organisation working to secure justice and accountability?

We are an LGBTQI+ organisation. We have always worked closely with UN human rights mechanisms, such as the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), as well as other international and local mechanisms to ensure justice and accountability. We do so by submitting shadow reports independently and in collaboration with other organisations. We also make recommendations and submit our reports and submissions to relevant processes and mechanisms including the Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. Locally, we have engaged in the drafting of three important gender bills and conducted workshops to increase LGBTQI+ individuals' awareness of their rights and provide information on how to seek justice. We have also worked extensively with the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka as a sub committee member.

### How have you helped survivors fight for justice?

In 2021, we successfully petitioned the Sri Lanka Court of Appeal, challenging the Sri Lanka Police after one of their trainers used homophobic and derogatory language during a training programme for police officers. We filed a petition seeking to prevent Sri Lanka Police from conducting trainings, lectures, and seminars that marginalise and violate the fundamental rights of LGBTQI+ people in Sri Lanka. This was the first time that a case of this nature had been filed in the country, where law enforcement was challenged by an organisation over alleged discrimination against the LGBTQI+ community. The case resulted in the police drafting and sharing a circular - the first of its kind in Sri Lanka - prohibiting arbitrary arrests, harassment, and all discriminatory actions, including anal and vaginal examinations, against LGBTQI+ individuals, and facilitating their access to help.

## F.S, Advocate for women and girls' rights in Tigray

### How are you helping victims and survivors of SGBV?

It is difficult to support from afar, but I try to share information and support the work on the ground as much as I can. However, it remains very hard to provide basic necessities. I, like many others, have tried to secure greater action but so far, there has not been any tangible outcome for women on the ground. I do what I can to raise awareness and amplify the voices of the women and girls that remain left behind, forgotten, invisible. For example, I have spoken on LAW's panel discussion on Tigray; but it often does not feel like enough. We need more action; we need to see the mobilisation and solidarity that has happened for Ukraine to happen for Tigray. What is driving the international community's response is politics, not humanity.

### What is needed to bring justice for the women and girls of Tigray?

Justice is just a word. So much is based on politics, especially when it comes to women and girls. Sexual and gender-based violence is used as a tool of war. Women are worst affected by the war. What is needed is the acknowledgement that women and girls have been victims of the war. It is about recognising their pain and what happened to them. Powerful women need to come together and raise their voices. Stories need to be told. We cannot rely on the peace deal to deliver justice for women and girls.

## We would like to thank our donors

European Union  
 U.S. Department of State  
 Kingdom of the Netherlands  
 Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad)  
 Swiss Solidarity  
 Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)  
 Canada (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)  
 UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture  
 Germany (Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs)  
 France (Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs)  
 Oak Foundation

## Financials (USD)

**Income:** **\$ 4,844,518**

Grants and Donations \$ 4,844,518

**Total income:** **\$ 4,844,518**

**Expense:** **\$ 4,405,138**

Programme and Operations \$ 4,405,138

**Total expense:** **\$ 4,405,138**

**Income increase 2022:** **18%**

**LAW anticipated  
funds for 2023:** **\$ 8,800,000**

Photo: LAW / Training on international justice system, Bangladesh



Photo: LAW / Training on violence against women, Bangladesh



# We would like to thank all our colleagues

## Partners

IFRAH Foundation  
Debevoise & Plimpton LLP  
Pan African Lawyers Union  
The National Peace Council of Sri Lanka  
Fortify Rights  
Centre for Equality and Justice  
Equal Ground  
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EuroMed Feminist Initiative  
Committee of the Families of the  
Kidnapped and Missing in Lebanon  
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Abaad - Resource Center for Gender  
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Witness Somalia  
Bandhu Social Welfare Society  
Society for Inclusion and Development  
in Communities and Care for all

Helem  
Masur  
Al Makan Shelter  
Women's Humanitarian  
Organization (PWHO)

## LAW's Board and Committee Members

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Rima el-Husseini

## And all LAW staff





Marking 10 years of fighting for victims and survivors

**In 2023, LAW is celebrating 10 years of an incredibly successful journey made possible thanks to the courage and resilience of the tens of thousands of people who stood up for their rights and those of others, the passion and commitment of staff and the drive, vision and leadership of our executive team and board.**

This year, we are excited to start new initiatives that will focus on:

- Empowering survivors and grassroots actors to document SGBV in Myanmar;
- The creation of an International Gender Justice Practitioners Hub; and
- Providing legal assistance to aid workers and aid organisations victims of targeted and deliberate attacks, with a focus on national aid workers.

**Thanks to the support of the Oak Foundation**, we are also delighted to lead on an innovative project that seeks to strengthen the international response to children survivors of sexual violence. Children are ten times more likely to become victims of conflict-related sexual violence than they were thirty years ago; yet they remain largely invisible in international justice processes and mechanisms that are relevant to them. We are looking forward to bringing together experts, champions and co-creating with children survivors a framework for action that meet their needs and priorities.



Photos: LAW