

PRESS RELEASE

October 28, 2016

Adoption of the Basic Principles on the Status of Refugees at the General Assembly of the International Association of Lawyers (UIA – Union Internationale des Avocats)

The International Association of Lawyers (UIA – Union Internationale des Avocats) adopted the Basic Principles on the Status of Refugees on Friday, October 28, 2016, during its annual congress in Budapest. These principles are intended to contribute actively to the dialogue and actions undertaken in relation to the “migration crisis”. In order to obtain as broad a consensus as possible, UIA proposes that the global community of lawyers also adhere to these principles.

Given the observation of the mass violation of the human rights of migrants currently and the fact that the status of refugees is being called into question, even in the most democratic countries, UIA’s aim is to review the concept of “refugee” through these Principles.

The declaration recalls the rights and obligations of asylum seekers and refugees in the light of international and regional instruments. The rights to access to minimum living conditions guaranteeing their basic needs, especially in terms of food, accommodation, access to drinking water and electricity, hygiene and protection against the elements are, for instance, quoted.

Through these principles, UIA emphasises the responsibility of States in the context of the current migration crisis and calls for deliberations on their migration policy at a more global level and from the perspective of shared responsibility between States.

For Jean-Jacques Uettwiller, UIA President: “The international community must set up solidarity mechanisms that make it possible to share the pressure resulting from the crisis equitably, in order to help the most affected countries to manage it. That is why UIA calls upon States to honour the commitments made, in particular in the September 2016 New York Declaration”.

The association itself commits to provide its assistance and its support to bar associations, in particular for the training of lawyers in refugee law, but also in the actions to be taken to combat the criminalization of national legislation on asylum and the spread of security-based criteria as reasons to deny the benefit of refugees’ recognised rights.

More generally, the Principles are intended to mobilise professional lawyers’ organisations so that they take action with regard to the competent authorities to ensure access to legal aid, compliance with national standards and the establishment of a global mechanism for consultation and cooperation.

Recalling the importance of the access to rights for these people, UIA calls upon States, bar associations, professional lawyers’ organisations and their members to apply the Basic Principles on the Status of Refugees.

More about the UIA



The Union Internationale des Avocats (International Association of Lawyers - UIA) was founded in 1927. It is the oldest worldwide legal association and brings together around two million lawyers through its individual members and collective members (bars, federations, and associations) from more than 110 countries.

The main aims of the UIA are to promote the fundamental principles of the legal profession; to contribute to the establishment of an international legal order based on the principle of justice between nations, through law and in the cause of peace; and, to defend lawyers and their clients.

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