

STATEMENT

Paris, 31 October 2025

Samoa

UIA-IROL expresses its deep concern regarding threats to the rule of law and judicial independence in Samoa

The Institute for the Rule of Law of the Union Internationale des Avocats (UIA-IROL) expresses its deep concern regarding recent developments in Samoa that raise serious issues for the rule of law and judicial independence.

Following the general elections of 29 August 2025, the newly elected Prime Minister of Samoa reportedly assumed additional ministerial portfolios, including those responsible for the Ministry of Police and Prisons and the Office of the Attorney General, while being a defendant in ongoing criminal proceedings before the District Court.

On 1 October 2025, the Samoa Law Society (SLS) issued a public statement welcoming the government's declared commitment to accountability, transparency, and good governance. At the same time, the SLS called for law enforcement and prosecutorial functions to be exercised independently, fairly, and impartially, in order to maintain public confidence in the justice system and to uphold democratic principles.

Following this statement, the SLS and several of its officers have reportedly been subjected to public attacks and criticism in the media and on social networks, which threaten to undermine the independence of the legal profession and the institutions that safeguard the rule of law.

UIA-IROL expresses its full support for the Samoa Law Society and its members. The Institute recalls that the independence of the legal profession and of bar associations is a fundamental component of the rule of law, as recognized by the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (1990).

UIA-IROL therefore calls on the authorities of Samoa to:

- ensure that the justice system, the Office of the Attorney General, and law enforcement agencies can operate independently and free from political interference;
- guarantee the safety and integrity of the Samoa Law Society and its members;
- reaffirm their commitment to the principles of the rule of law, separation of powers, and judicial independence.

UIA-IROL will continue to monitor the situation closely and stands ready to support the Samoa Law Society and the legal community in Samoa in their efforts to uphold the rule of law and the independence of the legal profession.

More about UIA-IROL

The Institute for the Rule of Law of the Union Internationale des Avocats (UIA-IROL) promotes the Rule of Law and supports and defends, in particular, (1) lawyers, judges and human rights defenders who are harassed, threatened and/or persecuted in the exercise of their professions, (2) the independence of the legal and judicial professions, and (3) the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, especially in defense of human rights.

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