

The rule of law and **access to justice**

The Rule of Law means that “no-one is above the law”. It is the foundation for the development of a peaceful, equitable and prosperous society. For the Rule of Law to be effective there must be equality under the law, transparency of law, an independent judiciary and access to legal remedy.

The issue

The importance of the Rule of Law for business confidence and institutional integrity, and therefore economic prosperity, sustainability initiatives and international trade, cannot be overstated.

In business terms, in countries where the Rule of Law is not properly upheld and enforced, the legal risk of operating in the country increases, resulting in a higher cost of capital and a lower likelihood of investment, alongside risks of bribery and corruption and unjust institutions.

The Rule of Law is promoted within United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (“SDG”) 16 for peace, justice and strong institutions, but the Rule of Law also related to SDG 1 (poverty reduction), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 8 (decent work) and SDG 10 (reduced inequality).

What we do

We advise governments, corporates, judiciaries and intergovernmental organizations such as the UN on best practices and legislative developments. We collaborate with clients to identify any weakness in the Rule of Law in jurisdictions where they operate and to design and implement solutions to address this. This might be by participating in legislative reform initiatives, advising the government on streamlining the judicial proceedings to reduce delay in the enforcement of contracts; training the judiciary on international law to reduce the instance of arbitrary or discriminatory treatment; or setting up operational legal grievance mechanisms to ensure that foreign investors can engage with stakeholders affected by their operations in a meaningful, collaborative and compliant way.

We have long prided ourselves on having one of the oldest and most substantial pro bono practices of any international law firm. Since the 1970s we have been harnessing the legal skills of our lawyers to advance issues of financial independence, equality, transparency of law and access to legal justice in every jurisdiction in which we operate.

We have taken on the challenge set out in the UN Sustainable Development Goals to maximize our impact by collaborating with clients and host governments to implement projects to strengthen the Rule of Law, particularly where it is weak. With over 2,500 lawyers working with clients operating in some of the most challenging jurisdictions, we believe that the potential impact that we can achieve with our clients is enormous.

Our impact

We have advised on the Rule of Law and partnered with our clients on access to justice initiatives across multiple jurisdictions and examples include:

- Advising the UN Special Rapporteur on racial injustice on police best practice and comparative legal remedies to ensure elimination of racial injustice in the context of policing in 13 jurisdictions around the world following the death of George Floyd in the United States
- Undertaking comparative research on High Judicial Councils to support the strengthening of the judicial system in Uzbekistan
- Submitting a detailed response to the independent review of administrative law in the UK regarding potential options for reform of the law of judicial review in England
- Representing the International Commission of Jurists as intervenor in a Hong Kong case regarding the rights of same sex spouses
- Working with the International Bar Association on a report regarding human rights abuses in North Korean prisons
- Advising Somalia’s Ministry of Trade and Industry on the country’s accession to the World Trade Organisation
- Establishing a platform to teach the rule of law with the South African Council of Churches as part of its Anchoring Democracy program
- Undertaking research on the legal framework for victims of trafficking from Vietnam in European transit countries as well as in the protection systems in those countries
- Working with the UN Office of Drugs and Crime to produce training videos on global bribery & corruption topics
- After 7 years of legal advocacy working alongside families, we were instrumental in securing [new legislation](#) to extend the UK Government’s victim’s compensation scheme to UK survivors of international terrorist incidents
- We advised the Adoption Rights Alliance (ARA) and Justice for Magdalenes Research (JFMR), on the widespread forced adoptions of children born to single mothers in Ireland. Our joint [CLANN Report](#) to the Commission of Investigation, prompted the Irish Government to pledge to allow families access to their institutional archives and an apology from the Irish Taoiseach

Useful links

[Our Pro Bono practice](#)

Relevant contacts

 **Yasmin Waljee**
International Pro Bono Partner
London
yasmin.waljee@hoganlovells.com

 **Amy Roma**
Partner, Washington, D.C.
amy.roma@hoganlovells.com

 **Michael Bell**
Partner, Washington, D.C.
michael.bell@hoganlovells.com

 **Crispin Rapinet**
Partner, London
crispin.rapinet@hoganlovells.com

 **Michael Roberts**
Partner, London
michael.roberts@hoganlovells.com

 **Ollie Armas**
Partner, New York
oliver.armas@hoganlovells.com

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Lovells**

www.hoganlovells.com

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