
03.09.2025

Appeal to the Italian National Forensic Council:

Respect for international law, the United Nations, and standing against genocide is the duty of professional organizations!

The European Association of Lawyers for Democracy and World Human Rights (ELDH) and the International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL) express their grave concern about the decision of the president of the National Bar Council CNF, lawyer Francesco Greco, to change the title, agenda, and also the very character of the already announced training which was scheduled with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, Francesca Albanese, and the lawyer and ELDH Co-President Barbara Spinelli.

Barbara Spinelli is a member of the Human Rights Commission of the CNF. The relevant commission had planned that on 4 September UN SR Francesca Albanese would present her current report, while Spinelli would focus on legal actions carried out by lawyers within international and national judicial mechanisms in the face of the ongoing genocide, and deliver a presentation based on the responsibilities of lawyers to protect civilians, fight against impunity, and contribute through legal tools to the prevention of genocide. The event was designed and announced as a training in which participating lawyers would receive credits. Following this announcement, right-wing newspapers and individuals in Italy began to pressure the CNF either to cancel the event or to integrate adversarial views into it. The timeline of objections included arguments that Albanese uses political language and is biased. All these debates were intertwined with an attack on the very mandate Albanese holds today.

CNF president Mr. Greco, instead of taking a stance based on the principled responsibilities of a professional organization and the requirements of defending international law and UN mechanisms, changed both the title and the program of the event. On top of that, he removed the credits that were to be given as a result of this professional training. In this sense, the blackmail amplified through the press found a response within the CNF, and the CNF, which was expected to make its choice in favor of a principled stance against genocide, unfortunately, quickly backtracked.

With this decision, the CNF has chosen to accompany and follow the intervention of the UN Rapporteur with voices openly aligned with the government of Israel, a government today responsible for an ongoing genocide. This is a choice that shows contempt not only for a distinguished representative of the United Nations, but above all for the institution she

represents. With this decision, the CNF is moving away from fundamental legal principles and giving the impression that it considers the results of legal analyses and conclusions to be arbitrary and replaceable. A legal training thus degenerates into a political debate.

International law, which is one of the tools of fundamental importance for the establishment of peace, is here being replaced by arbitrariness imposed by political power and, in essence, by those who hold power or their proxies. Beyond this, by opening the door to a political-legal stance that has for months been pressuring anyone who utters a sentence about Israel's act of genocide with manipulation and disinformation, CNF has signed off on a mistake that will be considered historic for such an important legal institution. At this point, it is the right to question whether this expresses CNF's position regarding the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court and their rulings on the crimes committed by the Israeli government.

The function of the Special Rapporteur is not a political opinion to be "balanced": it is an independent mandate, conferred by the United Nations General Assembly decades ago, based on legal and methodological criteria. Presenting it as questionable undermines the founding values of the Organization she represents, international law, and the very idea of global justice.

The institution of adversarial debate belongs to legal proceedings, not to professional training. Demanding it in this context means emptying the educational function and reducing legal training to a political stage. It is a wound for the Italian Bar, which thus abdicates its role as a bulwark of independence, autonomy, and protection of fundamental rights. The decision of the CNF to add speakers to the professional training programme who may justify or marginalize the severe crimes committed by the Israeli Government will damage the reputation of the CNF.

It is unworthy of the CNF to bow to pressure from an interest group and abandon its commitment to continuing legal education. With this decision, the CNF has made Ms. Albanese and Ms. Spinelli, who had agreed to take part in this training, personally the focus of attacks, and implicitly created strong ground for the subjective and aggressive debate conducted on their supposed "bias." But beyond that, despite being a legal institution, by retreating in the face of the ongoing disinformative debate against the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur, it has also signed off on a historic mistake.

The ELDH and the IADL demand that the event be rescheduled immediately in its designated form and that those responsible apologize to the two speakers. At the same time, ELDH and IADL demand that the CNF acknowledge and act upon its duty, as a professional legal organization, to contribute to the prevention of the ongoing genocide.

- **European Association of Lawyers for Democracy and World Human Rights (ELDH)**
- **International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL)**

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