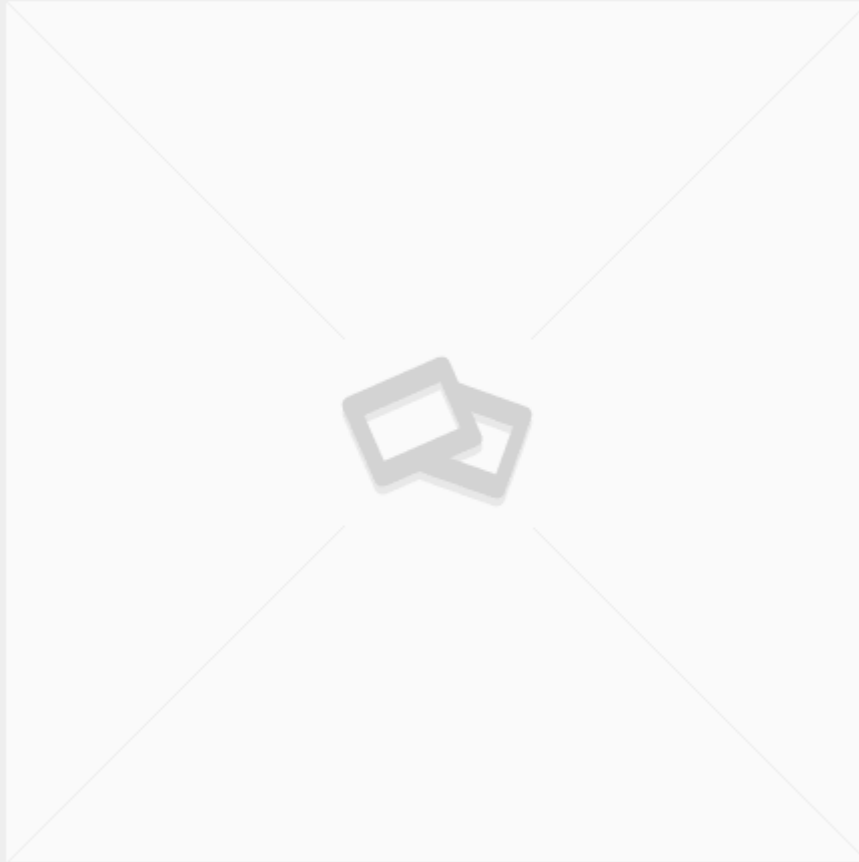


LEGAL PROFESSION MUST 'PREVENT ATTACKS ON ITS INDEPENDENCE', SAYS IBA PRESIDENT

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The legal profession must explore new ways of preventing attacks on its independence because lawyers perform a vital role in defending people against the “excessive powers” of governments, said International Bar Association (IBA) president David W Rivkin at the association’s annual conference.

Speaking at the IBA’s 2015 annual conference in Vienna, Rivkin said the the association's Presidential Task Force on the independence of the profession members would be exploring “the increasing attacks on self-regulation, independence, client privilege and privacy”.

He added that the task force would also examine what the legal profession could do to prevent such attacks. “In particular, we all need to explain better to the general public why the independence of the bar is important to a free society,” Rivkin said. “If lawyers are subject to government regulation or if they cannot consult with their clients in confidence, we cannot work to

protect the rights of citizens against the government. And we all need to continue to speak out when our colleagues' liberty is threatened when they challenge the government."

Rivkin said that lawyers were central to "every aspect of society". He continued: "Through our work, we enable business transactions; we encourage creativity by protecting intellectual property; we facilitate the successful and just resolution of disputes; we create the domestic laws and the international codes without which civil society could not function.

"Most importantly, lawyers serve as an independent bulwark against excessive power by governments. No other profession devotes as much of its time and energy to public service and pro bono work. We achieve all this through the power and creativity of our reasoning and the integrity of our actions. Too often, however, lawyers are taken for granted or the object of critical jokes. It is incumbent on all of us to explain to the rest of society – no, to shout – the great and important work that we do."