

HRLA Report from the Chair 2024/25

Welcome to the HRLA AGM

It is my pleasure to provide my second report as Chair of the HRLA.

We have had another very productive year, with a programme of events touching on diverse human rights issues. I attended nearly all of them and can confirm that the quality of the events was outstanding. Further details of our 2024 programme are provided below. My only regret is that we did not manage to put any events on in the first few months of the year, but we already have great plans for 2025 and I am confident the incoming EC will ensure a more even roll-out of activities as the year progresses.

In a new and exciting departure for the Association, last year we also collaborated with Human Rights Watch as a Presenting Partner of the Human Rights Watch Film Festival in London.

Under the excellent leadership of Ravina Bahra and Ananya Basu, last year was also another great year for our Young Lawyers Committee, which for good reason chose to rename itself as the Junior Lawyers Committee. I was assured when I came in as Chair that the YLC could be relied on to get on with the job of producing their own programme of carefully executed events, and that prediction has held true. It was a particular pleasure for me to contribute to the JLC's annual careers day in October, and to see an impressive number of junior and aspiring lawyers turning up to hear about human rights careers on a Saturday morning. You can read more about the JLC's achievements in 2024 in Ravina's separate report.

Following a hiatus in 2023, I was very pleased that our bursary scheme was revived last year. I know the bursary internships are going well and I am sure 2025 will be another good year for the scheme. My thanks to Conor Monighan for his patient stewardship of this process, on which further details are provided below.

It is now time for me to step down as Chair, but I am delighted that Shoaib Khan is stepping up to replace me. Shoaib has been a stalwart supporter of the HRLA for many years and will undoubtedly discharge his new role as Chair with great aplomb. My congratulations to all the other members of the new EC.

It only remains to say a few words of thanks. Firstly, to the Officers and members of the Executive Committee who have worked so hard to support me and the Association

in all the work we do. A few individuals warrant particular recognition: the two Vice Chairs, Shoab Khan and Lui Asquith, for their wise and constant support over the last two years; Camila Zapata Besso, who kindly and very competently stepped in as our new Treasurer; Caroline Cassin and Dr Louise Loder, for the enormous work they have done on the website (and in Louise's case for organising the Skills for Human Rights Practice event); Jack Dingley, for undertaking a long-overdue and time-consuming reorganisation of our membership systems; and most especially to Marianne Schönle, who has been a tower of calm strength and perseverance as our Secretary.

Secondly, thanks to all the speakers and contributors at our events who have given freely of their time and, without exception, provided excellent presentations. Thirdly, thanks to our Honorary President, Lord Justice Singh, for his continued support for the EC and the JLC, and for judging the JLC's moot competition. And finally to you, our individual and corporate members. I hope you will continue to engage with us and attend our events. Do please encourage your friends and colleagues to consider joining us.

I hope you can join us for the AGM at 18:15 on 18 February, whether online or in person at Hogan Lovells. We are very grateful to Hogan Lovells for hosting us, and to our guest speakers, Edward Grange of Corker Binning and Saara Idelbi of 5 Essex Chambers, who will relieve the tedium of listening to the Chair.

Joe Middleton KC

Chair of the HRLA

HRLA Events 2024/25

In 2024/25, the HRLA has continued to offer events in person, online, and in hybrid format:

| Date | Topic | Speakers | Host |
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| 15 July 2024 | Lord Kerr Essay Competition Award Ceremony: "Public Order Act 2023: One Year Later" | Jodie Beck (Liberty), Raj Chada (Hodge Jones & Allen), Professor David Mead (University of East Anglia), Adam Wagner (Doughty Street Chambers) | CMS London (in person and online) |
| 10 October 2024 | Climate Change and the Law | Oliver Jackson (11KBW), Lord Carnwath (former Justice of the Supreme Court, Associate Member of Landmark Chambers) and Jessica Simor KC (Matrix Chambers) | Hogan Lovells (in person) |
| 26 October 2024 | Careers Day | Keynote speech from Jason Pobjoy (Blackstone Chambers) Speakers (in alphabetical order by panel): Joe Middleton KC (Doughty Street Chambers), Shaimaa Al-Mukhtar (Leigh Day), Will Durrands (25 Bedford Row), Alex Wessely (Leigh Day), Bianca Pătulea (Senior Business and Human Rights Consultant), Juliet Wells (Temple Garden Chambers), Rae Lindsay (Clifford Chance), Dr Alicia Kroemer (Incomindios UK), Harj Narulla (Doughty Street Chambers), Monica Feria-Tinta (Twenty Essex), Abiodun Olatokun (The 36 Group), Dr Alice Nah (Durham University), Céline Winham (Irwin Mitchell), Malvika Jaganmohan (St Ives Chambers) | Goldsmiths, University of London (in person and online) |
| 29 October 2024 | Deprivation of Liberty of Children in the Court of Protection, the Family Court, and the Family Division of the High Court | Avril Rushe (No5 Barristers' Chambers), Andrew Bagchi KC (1GC Family Law), Ulele Burnham (Doughty Street Chambers), Mary Ryan (Nuffield Family Justice Observatory), and Juliette Cammaerts (Office of the Children's Commissioner) | No5 Barristers' Chambers (in person and online) |

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| 5 November 2024 | UK Sanctions in 2024: Help or Hindrance to Human Rights? | Peter Caldwell (Doughty Street Chambers), Nicholas Waddell (FCDO), Maia Cohen-Lask (Corker Binning), Natalia Kubesch (REDRESS) | Doughty Street Chambers (in person and online) |
| 27 November 2024 | Skills for Human Rights Practice | Joe Middleton KC (HRLA Chair, Doughty Street Chambers), Joanne Cecil KC (BHRC Vice Chair, Garden Court Chambers), Lui Asquith (HRLA Vice Chair, Russell-Cooke), Kirsty Brimelow KC (Vice Chair Elect of the Bar Council, Doughty Street Chambers), Amrit Kaur Dhanoa (Chair of the Bar Council's Young Barristers' Committee, 4-5 Gray's Inn Square), Philip Rule KC (HRLA Executive Committee, No5 Barristers' Chambers), Rachel Barnes KC (BHRC Executive Committee, Three Raymond Buildings), Haydée Dijkstal (BHRC Executive Committee, 33 Bedford Row), Zoe Harper (Doughty Street Chambers), Jack Dingley (HRLA Executive Committee, Pupil at Kenworthy's Chambers and former Head of Casework at Manuel Bravo Project), Oliver Jackson (HRLA Executive Committee, 11KBW), Shoaib M Khan (Vice Chair of HRLA, SMK Law Solicitors), Samia Yaqub (ILPA Well-being Working Group Co-Convenor), Josephine Fathers (BHRC Executive Committee, Garden Court Chambers), George Grammer-Taylor (Trainee Solicitor at Clyde & Co; Academic Committee Member, Client Interviewing Competition for England and Wales), Harj Narulla (Doughty Street Chambers), Dr Felicity Gerry KC (Libertas Chambers), Vicki Prais (HRLA Executive Committee, Human Rights Lawyer & Academic), Dr Debra Long (International Human Rights Policy Manager, The Law Society), Dr Louise Loder (University of Exeter Law School) | Online |
| 16 December 2024 | Judicial Review Moot Competition Semi-Final | Judged by: Joe Middleton KC, Mark Emerton, and Claudia Hyde | Landmark Chambers |

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|-----------------|--|--|-------------------------|
| 20 January 2025 | Judicial Review Moot Competition Final | Judged by: Lord Justice Singh, Philip Rule KC (No5 Barristers' Chambers), and Shoaib M Khan (SMK Law Solicitors) | Royal Courts of Justice |
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Membership

Corporate membership

To date, our Corporate Members in 2024/25 were as follows:

Chambers

1. Doughty Street Chambers
2. Essex Court Chambers
3. Goldsmith Chambers (Immigration Team)
4. Great James Street Chambers
5. Landmark Chambers
6. Monckton Chambers
7. No5 Barristers' Chambers
8. One Pump Court
9. Serjeants' Inn Chambers
10. Three Raymond Buildings
11. 4-5 Gray's Inn Square
12. 39 Essex Chambers

Firms

1. Corker Binning
2. Deccan Prime Solicitors LLP
3. Hogan Lovells
4. Laura Devine Immigration
5. Lawsmith Solicitors & Advocates
6. SMK Law Solicitors

Bursary Sponsors

1. Hewetson & Co
2. Westgate Wealth Management

We are grateful for the support of all of our Corporate Members. Special thanks to Hogan Lovells for hosting our AGM and the Climate Change and the Law event in October 2024. We are also grateful to No5 Barristers' Chambers for hosting our Deprivation of Liberty event in October 2024, Landmark Chambers for hosting the Judicial Review Moot Competition Semi-Final in December 2024, and Doughty Street Chambers for hosting our Sanctions and Human

Rights event in November 2024 as well as our upcoming event on the Human Rights of Pregnant Women, Mothers and Children in the Justice System on 5 March 2025. Please attend if you can.

Individual membership

At time of writing, we have a total of 1043 individual subscribed members. This includes 142 new sign-ups in 2024/25 since the last AGM on 4 March 2023.

Totals for the various membership types are as follows:

| Membership type | Number |
|--|-------------|
| Patron | 10 |
| Student | 363 |
| Associate (Trainees, pupils, paralegals, junior academics and NGO or Government employees) | 174 |
| Junior (up to 5 years since qualification) | 24 |
| Full (over 6 years since qualification) | 454 |
| Senior (over 10 years since qualification) | 18 |
| Total | 1043 |

We have now fully moved our membership database online with Membermojo, which allows individual members to access and update their own details.

As part of that, we have consolidated some of our member types, by removing separate categories for academics, NGO employees, and Judges, and merging those into the Associate category alongside trainees and pupils. There will therefore be a much larger number of Associates compared to last year.

Over the next year we will be auditing our membership records to make sure the data we hold is up to date. This may have an impact on membership numbers, but is not anything to worry about. Membermojo will now prompt our users to renew, and remove any who do not.

Bursary Scheme

The HRLA has re-launched the new bursary scheme this year. We were, for the first time, able to provide talented individuals with fully-funded bursaries at two leading human rights organisations - JUSTICE and 5 Essex Chambers.

The scheme was very successful and we received over 40 applications. All entries were double-marked for fairness and the panellists commented on the quality of the applications.

Particular thanks to our bursary sponsors - Hewetson & Co and Westgate Wealth Management, to JUSTICE and 5 Essex Chambers for offering placements, and to those Committee members who were involved in the marking process.

If you are aware of an organisation who might be interested in sponsoring next year's bursary then please do speak to our Bursary Officer. We hope applications will be open again late this year, subject to funding.

Website / Digital

Website

The HRLA website has been redesigned during this Committee year and was relaunched in January 2025. The new website offers improved navigation and visibility of HRLA's events, articles, and announcements. It has been redesigned to encourage member engagement and growth of the membership network, as well as to provide a platform and permanent archive for the HRLA's work and history. Dr Louise Loder and Oliver Jackson are currently working on uploading the HRLA's archive of past events and reports (dating back to 2010) to ensure that this material is not lost over time and with the changeovers of Committees in the future.

LinkedIn

HRLA posts regularly on LinkedIn, where it has over 3000 followers. With the website redesign there is significant scope to expand the HRLA's LinkedIn engagement in the future.

Mailchimp

Mailchimp has again, this year, proved a useful resource to connect via email with our large membership base. Mailchimp is the first port of call for marketing for all HRLA events and 24 emails were sent to the members. The current subscription allows only one email per 24 hours, which requires Committee members to book in any time-sensitive emails to the membership.

X/Twitter

Last year there were 31 posts by the HRLA on X/Twitter. In the past, some live-tweeting during events was undertaken by the HRLA's Administrator, before her departure. It has been suggested that in future, when event proposals are being submitted, they are accompanied by confirmation of whether the event will be live-tweeted and who will do it. One event was live-tweeted this year.

While the HRLA continues to post on X, given X's change of tone over the past year and controversy in relation to the actions of its owner, the Executive Committee has mooted the idea of leaving X.

At the time of writing, an account is being opened on the Bluesky platform and a dual presence will be maintained on both X and Bluesky. The Executive Committee considers that a decision as to whether the HRLA wishes to maintain its presence on X going forward ought to be left to the incoming Executive Committee.

Constitution Amendments: Proposal

The HRLA Constitution makes provision for a Young Lawyers Committee (YLC). On 9 July 2024, the YLC Chair informed the HRLA's Executive Committee that the YLC had voted in favour of changing its name from Young Lawyers Committee (YLC) to Junior Lawyers Committee (JLC). The Executive Committee subsequently approved this change. The Executive Committee has therefore directed that a resolution to replace references to "Young Lawyers Committee (YLC)" in the HRLA's Constitution with "Junior Lawyers Committee (JLC)" and "YLC" with "JLC" be put to the HRLA's membership at the 2025 Annual General Meeting.