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REPORT

**on the Survey Regarding Violations of Lawyers'
Professional Rights During Wartime**

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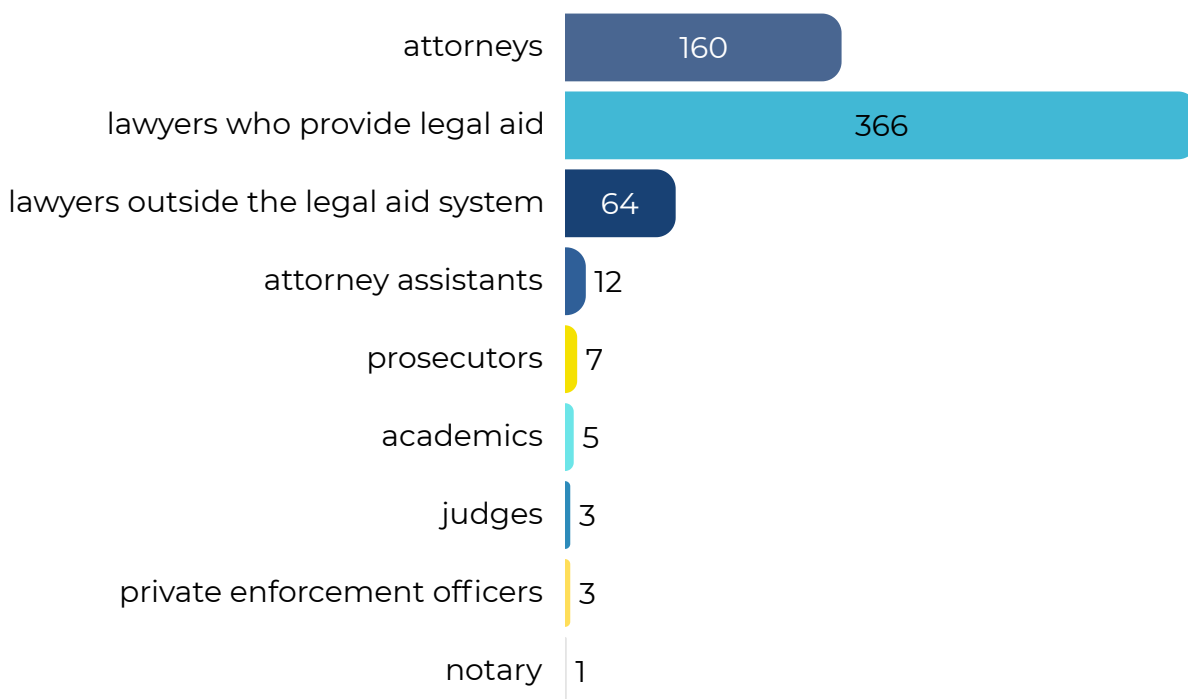


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In December 2024 - January 2025, the Ukrainian Bar Association (UBA) and its Human Rights Institute conducted a survey among lawyers on violation of their rights or interference with their professional activities during wartime. This survey was aimed at identifying both individual cases and systemic problems affecting the work of lawyers.



621 respondents



76 specializing in criminal law

545 various areas of law



A map of Serbia divided into 28 numbered regions. The regions are represented by dark blue shapes with white outlines, each containing a yellow number. The numbers are: 8, 11, 38, 29, 18, 56, 31, 7, 19, 18, 54, 40, 21, 17, 9, 24, 21, 64, 6, 38, 10, 5, 28, and 21. The map shows the geographical layout of these regions within the borders of Serbia.

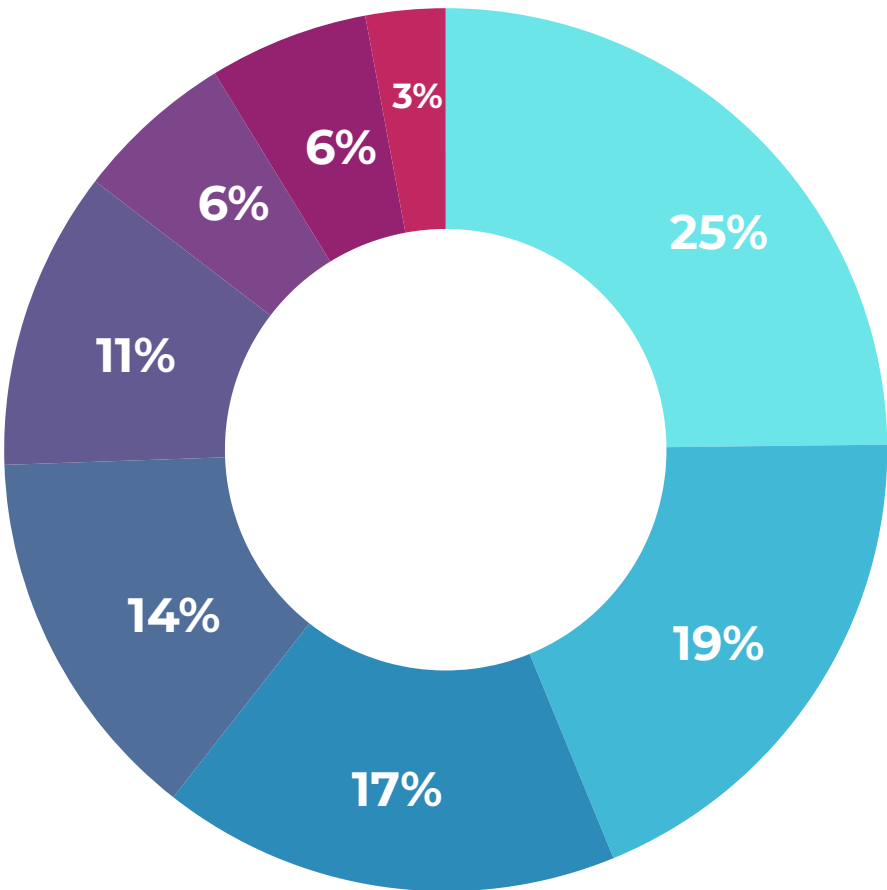










Have you encountered interferences in carrying out your professional activities?



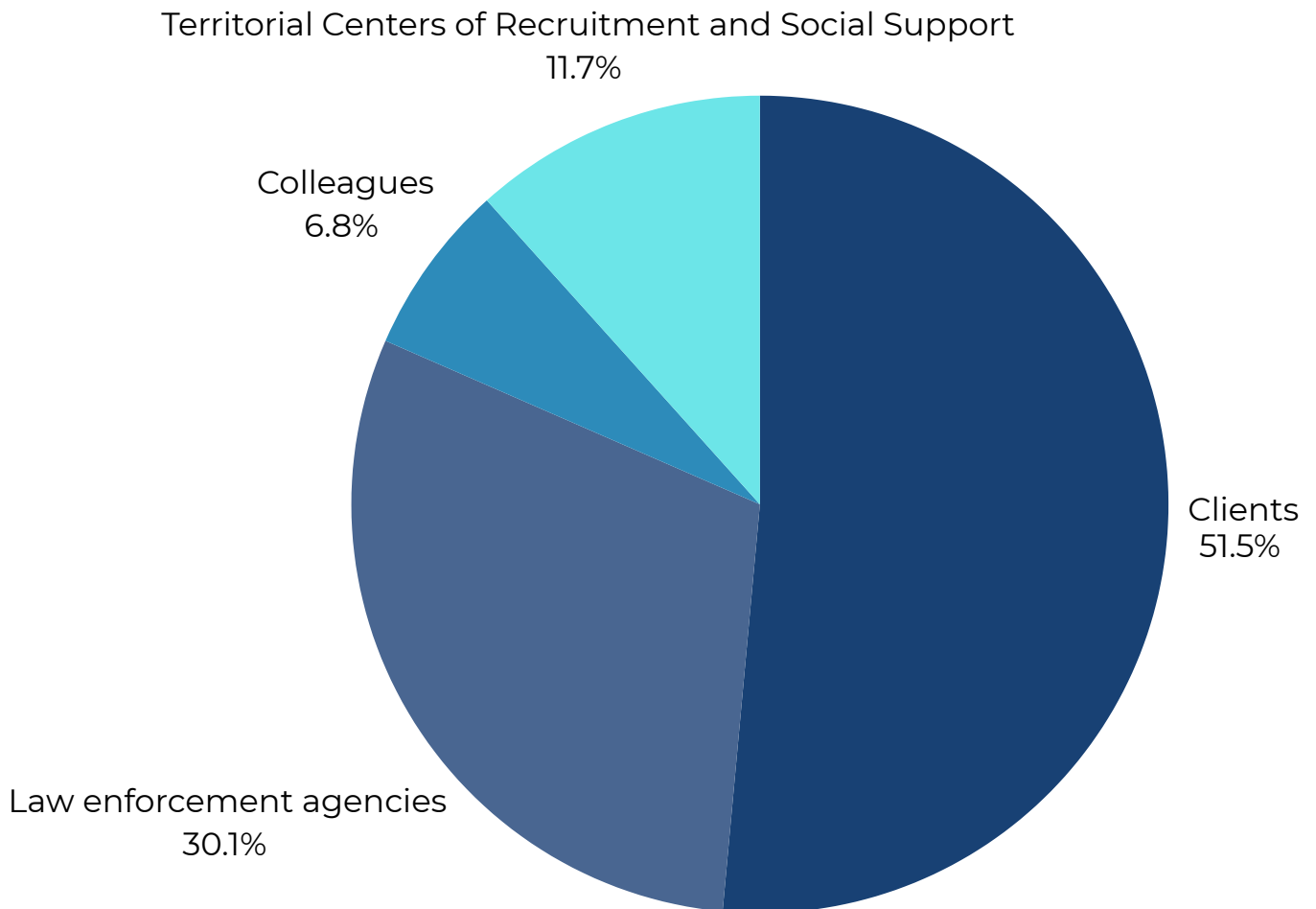
484 did not experience interferences

137 experienced interferences



-  Inefficiency and bias of judicial and law enforcement bodies
-  Interference from Territorial Centers of Recruitment and Social Support
-  Denial of access to clients or case materials
-  Failure to respond to attorney inquiries
-  Pressure, threats, and persecution of attorneys
-  Client aggression toward attorneys
-  Legislative gaps and inconsistency in legal practice
-  Resource constraints due to the war

SOURCES OF INTERFERENCES:



Some respondents reported isolated cases of pressure from the families of military personnel (emotional pressure, negative remarks, aggression due to their personal circumstances), opponents in court proceedings (threats of physical harm, unfounded complaints, attempts to discredit lawyers), and journalists, activists, or public figures (public pressure, threats to disclose information, attempts to influence legal work through media pressure).

COMPLAINTS ABOUT VIOLATIONS

Seeking legal assistance

- Only 18% (25 respondents) sought legal help.
- Requests were submitted to the police, Ministry of Defense, Ombudsman, and Parliament committees.
- Most respondents noted lack of adequate response.

Contact with Professional Self-Governance Bodies

- Only 26 respondents (about 18%) contacted the relevant self-governance bodies, while the others did not.
- Several respondents noted that they submitted complaints to the Ukrainian National Bar Association (UNBA) or regional bar councils.
- Some feedback was positive — for example, respondents mentioned effective measures taken following their appeals.
- At the same time, some respondents emphasized the passivity of the relevant bodies.

General Findings

- Most respondents do not seek help, possibly due to lack of trust or awareness of protection mechanisms.
- Those who did mostly encountered passive or ineffective responses.
- Positive outcomes were rare but possible.
- Overall, response to rights violations is extremely limited, and trust in remedies remains low.



STEPS FOR IMPROVEMENT SUGGESTED BY RESPONDENTS

Protection of legal professionals

This was the most frequently mentioned topic. Respondents emphasized the need to establish effective mechanisms to protect legal professionals from pressure, particularly to ensure the inviolability of attorneys' professional activities.

Increased accountability for violations

The second most common suggestion was to strengthen responsibility for violations of the rights of legal professionals. Several respondents noted that there should be real sanctions for obstructing the work of attorneys or denying them access to cases.

Improved legislative regulation

Some respondents believe that the legislative framework should be improved and new mechanisms introduced to protect the professional rights of legal practitioners.

Role of self-governing bodies

The role of the Ukrainian National Bar Association and the Qualification and Disciplinary Commission of Prosecutors was also mentioned, with respondents believing these bodies should respond more actively to violations.

Public awareness

Although this was mentioned less frequently, some respondents believe that society should be better informed about the role of legal professionals to help prevent negative attitudes toward them.

Analysis of proposals for improving interaction between legal professionals, government authorities, and society

Cooperation with government bodies



This was the most frequently mentioned topic among respondents. The proposals relate to establishing systematic communication between legal professionals and government institutions, creating advisory councils within government bodies, and increasing cooperation in the field of law enforcement.

Expansion of advocacy initiatives



Several respondents emphasized the need to actively promote advocacy campaigns that protect the rights of the legal community and raise important professional issues at the public level.

Enhancing public legal awareness



Some respondents stressed the importance of educational efforts among citizens regarding the legal system and the role of legal professionals in society.

Involvement of legal professionals in lawmaking



Although not mentioned frequently, some responses highlight the need for greater involvement of the legal community in the development of legislation and reforms.

The role of professional associations



Proposals to strengthen the role of professional associations (in particular, the Ukrainian National Bar Association) in facilitating communication between lawyers and the authorities were also mentioned, though they were not dominant.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The professional activity of legal professionals in Ukraine is under pressure, manifested in restricted access to clients, violations by state authorities, and aggression from clients.
2. Systemic distrust in protection mechanisms and the low percentage of formal complaints indicate a security crisis of legal professionals.
3. The insufficient effectiveness of professional self-governance bodies and state institutions in responding to complaints aggravates the situation.
4. There is a clear demand for comprehensive changes—legislative, institutional, educational, and communicative—aimed at protecting legal professionals.
5. The absence of systematic cooperation with authorities necessitates the creation of new platforms for dialogue, including the involvement of legal professionals in policy and lawmaking processes.

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