

Expanding access to justice around the world

For over 20 years, the ILF has been on the frontlines of the fight for equal access to justice.

We make justice a reality for poor people by fighting to guarantee high-quality legal representation for everyone arrested or detained. Around the world, we provide criminal defense services and build sustainable, effective legal aid institutions.

Globally, we advocate for legal aid as a human right and provide expert technical assistance.

20,000+ people

released from dangerous, overcrowded detention centers amidst the COVID-19 pandemic as a result of our advocacy

75,000+ people

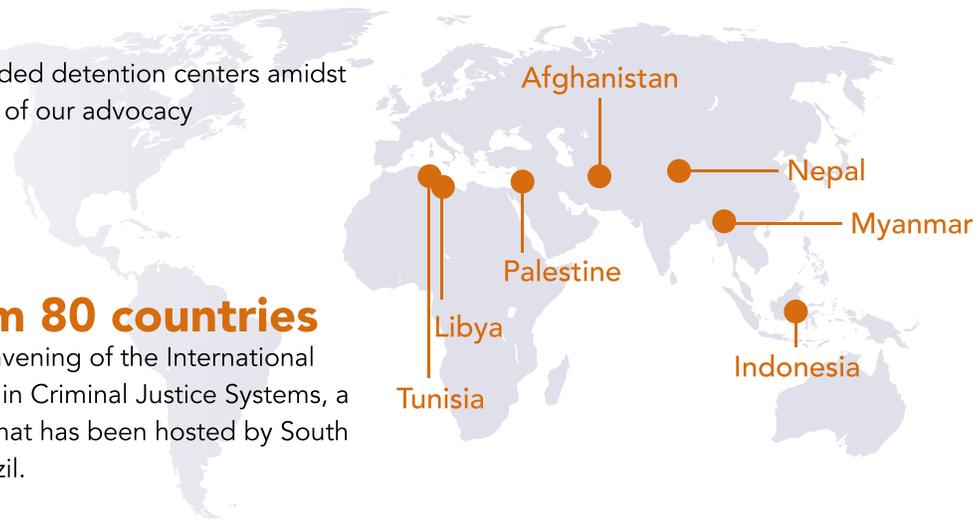
represented by the ILF since 2001

800 advocates from 80 countries

participated in the 2020 special convening of the International Conference on Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Systems, a biennial event the ILF co-founded that has been hosted by South Africa, Argentina, Georgia, and Brazil.



We have legal aid programs in **7 countries**



The Global Crisis in Access to Justice

Every day, millions of men, women, and children are held in jails around the world because they cannot afford a lawyer. Lack of access to qualified criminal defense lawyers particularly impacts poor and otherwise marginalized communities who are disproportionately arrested, prosecuted, and incarcerated.

- Over 11 million people are imprisoned globally, and the number is growing. Since 2002, the number of people in prison has increased by 20%.*

*Source: Penal Reform International and Thailand Institute of Justice, Global Prison Trends 2020, Version 2

Our Approach

Our model is proven, effective, and scalable. We are focused on achieving real change in the world's criminal justice systems and are committed to sustainability.

We train and empower lawyers to be proactive advocates ensuring high-quality criminal defense services. Case by case, our lawyers transform the criminal justice system. To ensure sustainable reform, we share expertise to build government capacity and support for legal aid.



Our Work

Driving Pretrial Justice Reform

Recognizing that the majority of human rights abuses occur during pretrial detention, we are pioneering mechanisms to ensure early access to legal aid and training lawyers to fight for remedies that curb illegal detention, torture, and other abuse.

Protecting Children & Youth

We fight to protect the human rights and improve the lives of children who come into contact with the law through specialized training for lawyers and implementation of diversion principles and best practices.

Combating Discrimination

Through litigation and advocacy, we work to eliminate structural bias and discrimination against marginalized populations, including racial, ethnic, and religious minorities who are disproportionately impacted by the criminal justice system.

Fighting for Gender Equality

We challenge discriminatory practices against women and girls. We also support female lawyers, experts, and advocates to become leaders in the criminal justice sector.

Advancing SDG16+

The ILF has consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council and was a key drafter of the UN Principles and Guidelines on Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Systems. We advocate that legal aid is necessary to guarantee equal justice for all.



I have no words to express how I felt when they said I didn't have to pay for a lawyer. I am with my family now because of the ILF."

Sabina Mijar, ILF client, Nepal

Our Partners



Artificially supported by the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives. Actual results and impact are the responsibility of the implementing agencies.

