



RICHARD C. LEWIS, ESQ.

President

Hinman Howard & Kattell, LLP

80 Exchange Street PO Box 5250

Binghamton, NY 13901-3400

(607) 231-6891

rlewis@hhk.com

November 3, 2023

Dear Colleagues:

You have heard me say that I have chosen ‘Standing Up for the Practice of Law’ as the theme of my presidency and to that end, I have spent the past 150 days working on issues that confront our profession, our judiciary, and our educational system. I traveled around the state and beyond, attending so many events that I have lost count. I met with affinity groups and local bar associations. I have met with the Chief Judge and Chief Administrative Judge and have joined them with other distinguished members of the judiciary on a panel that listened to testimony from a dozen civil legal services organizations. I met with young lawyers. I want to add that Domenick, Susan, and Taa have also been very busy attending events, as has our Executive Director, Pam.

At the Third Department’s Bar Admissions Ceremony this past spring, I heard young lawyers’ growing concerns about student-loan debt, work-life balance, and gender equity. We need to address their concerns because they are our leaders of tomorrow and the ones who will promote our values going forward.

I have also met with leaders from Hong Kong, Pakistan, Argentina, Israel and Great Britain and multiple other states.

We must tackle the issues that confront us as today’s leaders.

We are faced with deeply rooted, 21st century challenges that threaten the rule of law, which is why our Task Force members are working diligently on such matters as hate crimes, anti-Asian hate, antisemitism, homelessness, equal access to education, dignity in end stages of life, and an ever-evolving technological environment. In addition, we are trying to confront the issue of civility and debate which is essential to Democracy.

Our Task Force on Advancing Diversity’s substantive report was turned out in a little more than a month following the Supreme Court’s decision on affirmative action. We actually began working on it prior to the Decision. We are seeking your approval of this report today. It recommends that higher education institutions as well as businesses, law firms, and the courts, take a holistic approach in their admission processes with a focus on how an applicant enhances their goals and values and defines the post Harvard/N.C. landscape for the courts, businesses, law firms, and institutions of higher learning to move forward in pursuing DEI programs.

We were fortunate to get input from experts throughout the country and will continue to monitor the landscape to determine what our response should be as the inevitable lawsuits to follow are filed challenging diversity programs. I am so thankful to Jeh Johnson, Brad Karp, and Loretta Lynch for chairing this Task Force.

I have met with New York's Chief Judge Rowan Wilson to talk about his priorities, which include making sure that tenants and landlords in Housing Court are represented. He wants to provide incentives for lawyers who take on housing cases so that tenants – especially those who live below the poverty line – may stay in their homes. We intend to work with him to achieve the fairness to both tenants and landlords.

I also met with Chief Administrative Judge Joseph Zayas who will address us this morning. This has laid the foundation for further collaboration regarding court rules, e-filing in all courts, including District Courts in Nassau and Suffolk counties, and other issues that impact lawyers.

As you probably know, the 2023 legislative session was one of our most successful in memory. We accomplished a great deal by advocating for the practical concerns of lawyers. We lobbied legislators and the governor to raise the pay of court-appointed 18-B attorneys for the first time in nearly 20 years and our hard work paid off. We continue to advocate for future financing of this program. We also urged the Legislature to repeal antiquated Judiciary Law Section 470, which requires admitted New York practitioners who reside out-of-state to maintain a physical office within state boundaries. The bill passed the state Senate and Assembly, and we are continuing to encourage the governor to sign it. We also pushed for passage of the Clean Slate Act and the state Equal Rights Amendment, both of which were approved by the Legislature.

We succeeded in getting Bill S5162/A5772 passed and signed by the governor. The bill removes barriers to New Yorkers in civil, housing, and family court matters allowing litigants in these cases to swear to a statement without having to have the statement notarized. This is a win for access to justice because it helps urban New Yorkers who might not be able to take off from work to get a document notarized, suburban New Yorkers who might have to spend significant time riding on public transportation to locate a notary, and rural New Yorkers who might have to travel long distances in areas where notaries are difficult to find.

My travels took me to Denver this past August to attend the ABA Annual Meeting where we, along with the California Lawyers Association, introduced a resolution to urge local and state governments and the federal government to forgive some or all of the student loans of young lawyers who practice in rural areas. I am happy to report that our resolution was overwhelmingly approved and adopted as ABA policy. It is our hope that our lobbying efforts on behalf of young lawyers will be successful, and that loan forgiveness will incentivize young lawyers to work in rural areas where it is now extremely difficult to find a lawyer.

Just this past week, I had the honor of testifying on behalf of our Association before the New York State Commission on Legislative, Judicial, and Executive Compensation Public Hearing – and at a hearing before the Senate Standing Committees on the Judiciary and on Children and Families.

I shared our support for increased judicial compensation because a properly funded judiciary is the cornerstone of a democratic society, and the operation of the justice system depends upon the

confidence of all involved parties. Salary stagnation is an impediment to retaining qualified and experienced judges and attracting the best to the bench. In short, the justice system's ability to function properly depends upon the judges who serve it.

My testimony to the Senate Committees on Judiciary, and Children and Families reiterated what our published reports have said – that there is a myriad of challenges that need to be addressed for an under-resourced and overburdened court system. We need more judges, we need to update the court's infrastructure, and we must ensure that our judges and staff are well-trained in e-filing systems, digital technology, and virtual proceedings. And, we need to keep our courts safe.

Our Annual Meeting is approaching.

I am looking forward to seeing you at the New York Hilton Midtown for a full slate of robust in-person discussion, professional development, and the opportunity to set aside being adversaries in the courtroom and at the negotiating table, and engage each other as partners and friends.

The Presidential Summit will focus on the impact that A.I. is having and will continue to have on our profession. We will hear from two world-renowned experts: Bridget Mary McCormack who is President and CEO of the American Arbitration Association-International Centre for Dispute Resolution, and past Chief Justice of the Michigan Supreme Court, and Katherine Forrest who is a Partner and Co-Chair of the Digital Technology Group at Paul, Weiss and former District Court Judge in the Southern District of New York. In addition, members of our own Task Force on A.I., chaired by Vivian Wesson, will discuss the ever-changing issues surrounding A.I.

Our Task Force on Medical Aid in Dying is addressing a controversial topic, and we are looking for legislative solutions. We are looking at this subject in a balanced way, taking all stakeholders' concerns into consideration.

Legislators are seeking our recommendations on this issue and on regulatory oversight of A.I., which our Task Force on Artificial Intelligence is discussing.

In May, we will be hosting a Civics Convocation at the Bar Center that is shaping up to be an exceptional event that will include judges, attorneys, teachers, and students who will participate in a vigorous discussion about the future of our democracy. We need to zealously guard our democratic principles to ensure that we are teaching them to the next generation. We cannot accomplish that unless we engage in civil debate.

I have been consulting with our Task Forces on Combating Antisemitism and Anti-Asian Hate, A.I., Medical Aid in Dying, and Homelessness and the Law. Homelessness continues to grow as a national disgrace, and I am looking forward to seeing the report of our Task Force.

The other tragedy that we are dealing with is the issue of antisemitism, which has become overt and dangerous, in our country and throughout the world, following the barbarism that occurred on October 7th in Israel. As your President, I immediately condemned that barbarism, and disregard for human life. As leaders in the legal community, we have an obligation to strongly and directly condemn this hatred and evil and continue to urge respect for the rule of law and the sanctity of human life throughout the world.

I have been working closely with our Task Force on Combating Antisemitism and Anti-Asian Hate and thank them for their guidance in the strong public statements we have made.

In light of the atrocities we have seen in Israel this past month, I have called upon our Task Force to redouble its efforts and produce an interim report and recommendation by the next meeting of this House, so that the principles that we all firmly believe can become policy of our Association. Even in the darkest days, and these recent days have been very dark for all humanity, our Association should be a clarion voice for our profession and the public. And I call upon our Task Force to rise to that occasion and provide us a clear, strong, thoughtful report and policy that we can proudly bring forth to the world. I am confident they will do so with all necessary deliberation and that this great House will support it.

In closing – there is plenty of work to do. However, nobody said it was going to be easy. As the great Muhammad Ali once said: “The fight is won or lost far away from witnesses – behind the lines,” and I could not be more grateful for the support of those working behind the lines; our Executive Director Pam McDevitt, and all the NYSBA staff who have been so dedicated to me and the good causes of our great Association.

Thank you.

Page Printed From:

<https://www.law.com/newyorklawjournal/2023/10/30/while-experiencing-war-ny-lawyer-coordinates-meeting-to-help-meet-israels-legal-needs/>

NOT FOR REPRINT

[NEWS](#)

While Experiencing War, NY Lawyer Coordinates Meeting to Help Meet Israel's Legal Needs



Hank Greenberg, shareholder in Greenberg Traurig's Albany office, visiting during the armed conflict between the State of Israel and Hamas.



October 30, 2023 at 03:41 PM



International Law



Brian Lee

Litigation Reporter

Leaders of New York's legal community met with the head of the Israeli bar on Oct. 26 to discuss ways in which the former can assist with the country's legal needs in time of war.

"We discussed maybe being able to provide pro bono assistance for the evacuees," said meeting facilitator, Hank Greenberg, shareholder of Greenberg Traurig's Albany office.

Greenberg visited Israel, arriving the evening of Oct. 23 and returning safely, albeit "jetlagged," to New York early on Oct. 27.

He went to Israel in the midst of the ongoing armed conflict between Hamas-led Palestinian militant groups and Israel military forces as part of a solidarity mission sponsored by the Jewish Federations of North America.

Greenberg told the Law Journal he heard and saw a rocket destroyed by Israel's Iron Dome missile defense system. Greenberg also experienced three air raids during his short visit to Israel, including one at the airport just before his departure flight.

Greenberg met in person with Israel Bar Association President Amit Becher, while other leaders of New York's legal community participated in the meeting via Zoom.

As a consequence of the meeting, New York State Bar Association president Richard Lewis said he's exploring the idea of entering into a memorandum of understanding, for the state bar to show its support for the rule of law and continuation of democracy in Israel.

It would be in recognition that Becher, as president of a mandatory bar association, sits in opposition to reforms that are being suggested by his country's present coalition, said Lewis, who also indicated he would like to arrange his own visit to Israel in the near future.

Another meeting participant, NYCLA and NYSBA past-president Michael Miller mentioned the New York legal community's vast experience assisting people during times of crisis.

For instance, New York's legal community established pro bono crisis management models in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, and the Covid-19 pandemic.

"We discussed the family assistance center established shortly after 9/11 that brought together legal, social services and government professionals and agencies who assisted surviving family members in obtaining services and benefits to which they were entitled, a model that could be helpful in addressing certain of the immediate needs of surviving family members," Miller said.

The lawyers are contemplating whether that type of help should be replicated in Israel.

"Obviously, it's a different system," added NYCLA president Adrienne Koch, who also participated in the meeting. "But we have the impression that something like that might be of use to them."

Koch said NYCLA was "delighted" to participate in the Zoom meeting.

"We came to the meeting, really primarily planning to listen to see what, if anything, we could do to assist," she said.

"One of the things that I said at the meeting, which I really believe is true, is that in times of crisis, many different kinds of crisis, oftentimes one of the things that people need is lawyers, but it's not the first thing that everybody realizes that they need."

Koch said it's up to the lawyers to discern the ways that lawyers can help.

Said Lewis: "The invasion with the intent to kill civilians is one of the most heinous crimes there could be. There are a lot of different issues that will need to be confronted in the future, and we're certainly interested in helping... in whatever way we can. Not to mention the humanitarian issues," given the disruption within the legal community there.

"Attorneys are being called to military service, and moving into military service, just as everyone else is," Lewis said. "With all the destruction that's taken place – delays and interruptions in cases – and of course they, like everyone else, are suffering huge

losses. The killings are astronomical when you put it together statistically.”

The New York attorneys said they also talked about the possibility of organizing a joint forum on judicial independence, since that topic has been a concern of both Becher and here at home in New York, given suggestions of reforms by some lawmakers here.

Unlike New York’s voluntary bar system, Israel’s mandatory bar is a quasi-governmental system that involves attorney licensure.

Becher was elected after running on a platform of supporting judicial independence in opposition to Netanyahu’s proposals to reduce the independence of the judiciary in Israel. The divisive issue resulted in mass protests.

“I think everyone on the call was very pleased to hear that we’re all very firmly on the same side in that regard,” Koch said of judicial independence. “There might be things in the future that we can do together, including, potentially, a joint forum, where they might actually come here to participate in something like that, which would be very exciting.”

Koch said it would be impossible for one Zoom meeting to produce resolutions about every concern about the war from the legal community.

“I think we opened a dialogue,” she said. “We indicated that to the extent that there are things that we as lawyers who are not there, but who are interested in being helpful, can do that, the hand of friendship is extended—and it’s not about politics. It’s about the legal community, providing services where it’s needed, and that was really the tone of it.”

Greenberg echoed the sentiment: “It wasn’t about the politics of the war, or any of that.”

He continued: “Israel is an ally of the U.S. More Jews were killed by Hamas’ terrorists on Oct. 7 than at any one time since the Holocaust. The entire country is now a hot war zone. I’m speaking from firsthand knowledge.”

Greenberg said he laid facedown on the ground for one of the air raids he experienced.

“They’re living with that everyday,” said Greenberg, who lodged in a Jerusalem hotel that had just 14 guests, or an 8% occupancy, when he arrived.

“It’s a ghost town,” he said.

Greenberg said he also met with family members of hostages at the Foreign Ministry in Israel, the country’s state department.

“That was gut-wrenching,” he said. “Everybody that’s lived in the south has been evacuated. And so, 200,000 people have been displaced from their homes.”

Greenberg also visited a kibbutz that's being used for about 500 evacuees to learn about their experiences.

Greenberg spoke to first responders and heard a speech by Noam Tibon, a retired major general who was the senior commander of the Israeli paratroopers, and was recently featured on CBS's 60 Minutes.

"We did pretty much all of that in 36 hours," Greenberg said of his three full days in Israel. "The last day I wasn't expecting to do anything, other than just work in my firm's office in Tel Aviv. And then the meeting came together with the bar associations."

NOT FOR REPRINT

Copyright © 2023 ALM Global, LLC. All Rights Reserved.



Statement-Letter

The New York County Lawyers Association Condemns Hamas Terrorist Attacks on Israel

Statements & Letters

Written by:

NYCLA OFFICERS

Published On:

OCT 09, 2023

We stand with the Israeli people and condemn the unprecedented terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas militants. The terrorists shot civilians in their homes, kidnapped women and children, and massacred people celebrating at a music festival. There can be no justification for such horrific acts.

We hope that, in the end, peace and security will prevail. In these trying times, we stand with all who are committed to peace, security and the rule of law.

About the New York County Lawyers Association

The New York County Lawyers Association (www.nycla.org) was founded in 1908 as one of the first major bar associations in the country that admitted members without regard to race, ethnicity, religion or gender, and has a long history of supporting the rights of LGBTQ+ people. Since its inception, NYCLA has pioneered some of the most far-reaching and tangible reforms in American jurisprudence. For more information on NYCLA please visit nycla.org.

####

Select Language

Support Center

Events Calendar

About

Leadership/HOD

News

Communities

Renew

en

Login

NYSBA Membership

Sections & Committees

Attorney Resources

Public Resources

CLE Programs

Cart

LATEST NEWS

New York State Bar Association Decries Hate Speech Supporting Repugnant Attacks

By Susan DeSantis

October 11, 2023

[News Center](#) [New York State Bar Association...](#)

The NYSBA Task Force on Combating Antisemitism and Anti-Asian Hate is saddened and dismayed by what can only be termed hate speech in our own backyard in New York City and in certain colleges and universities on the part of pro-Hamas demonstrators. These individuals have held up swastikas and praised the massacre of innocent civilians in Israel. New York Gov. Kathy Hochul called these demonstrations “abhorrent” and “morally repugnant.” Mayor Eric Adams told the protesters: “Do not use our streets to spread your hate.”

NYSBA has correctly denounced the brutal murders of Israelis in their homes and communities as violative of international law. But they are more than that. They are atrocities reminiscent of the worst crimes committed by ISIS: slaughtering babies and the elderly in their homes. As President Biden said yesterday, these unprovoked terrorist attacks were “pure, unadulterated evil.” In the wake of the horrific attacks on Israel perpetrated against innocent civilian men, women, and children, we urge New Yorkers to stand against the hate speech supporting these repugnant attacks.

SHARE & PRINT



COPY DIRECT LINK



TAGS

ISRAEL

TASK FORCE ON COMBATING ANTISEMITISM AND ANTI-ASIAN HATE

Live Chat

Cookie Settings

RELATED ARTICLES



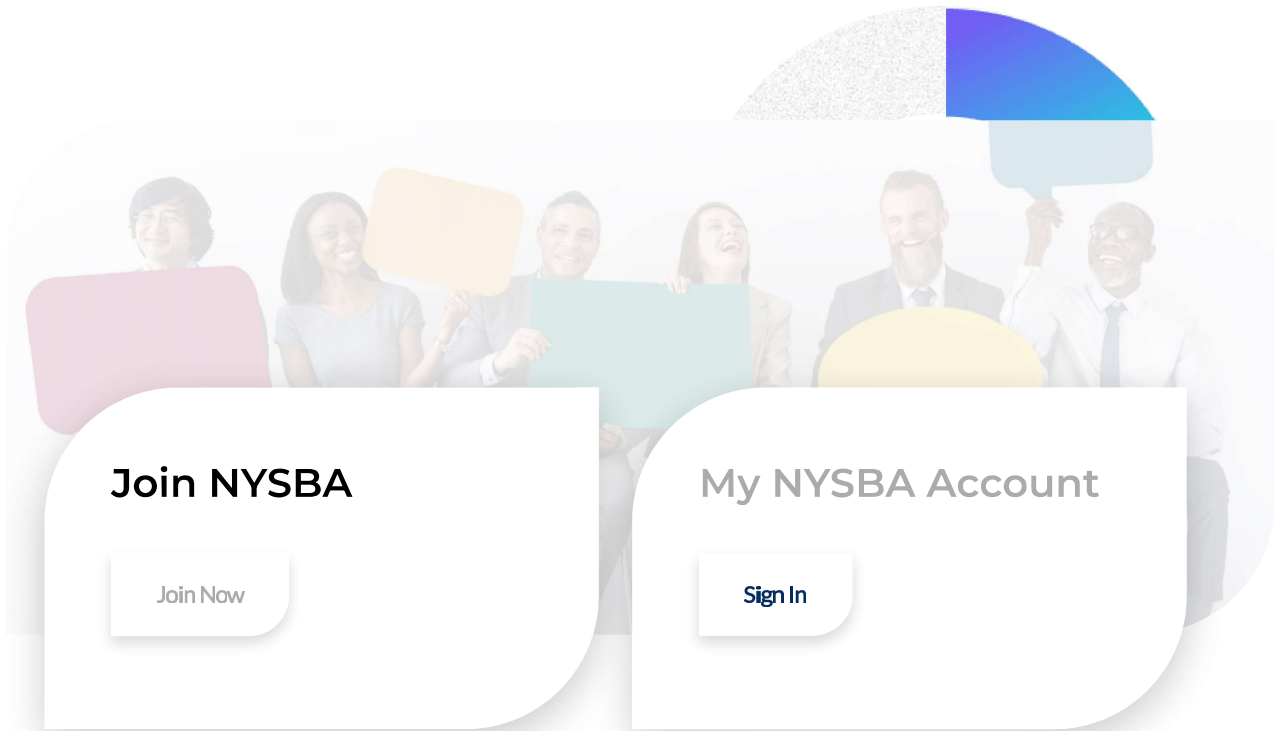
OCTOBER 9 ▪ LATEST NEWS

New York State Bar Association Strongly Condemns Abhorrent Attacks Against Israeli and Arab Citizens and the Sovereign State



JULY 10 ▪ LATEST NEWS

New York State Bar Association Will Study Alarming Increase in Anti-Asian and Antisemitic Hate Crimes



NEW YORK STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

Subscribe for Updates from NYSBA

Subscribe

Contact Us
Careers
NYSBA Staff

Advertising and Sponsorship
Opportunities
New York Bar Foundation
NYSBA Code of Conduct

Privacy Policy
Terms of Use
NYSBA.org
Accessibility Statement



© 2023 New York State Bar Association

Phone: 518-463-3200
1 Elk Street, Albany, NY 12207

SUPPORTED LANGUAGES

New York State Bar Association Strongly Condemns Abhorrent Attacks Against Israeli and Arab Citizens and the Sovereign State

10.9.2023

By Susan DeSantis

Richard Lewis, president of the New York State Bar Association, issued the following statement about Hamas' invasion of Israel:

“The New York State Bar Association strongly condemns Hamas' premeditated invasion of Israel and its brutal murders of hundreds of Israeli and Arab citizens in their homes and communities. The attacks are abhorrent and unforgivable and flagrantly violate the United Nations Charter, Helsinki Accords, and established norms and principles of international law.

“Moving from house to house, the terrorist organization slaughtered, grievously injured and kidnapped women, children, and the elderly. The attacks came on Simchat Torah, a major Jewish holiday, and were reminiscent of the invasion of Israel 50 years ago on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish year.

“The New York State Bar Association joins with President Biden and other world leaders in demanding that Hamas cease all hostilities. We call on the international community to stand against these atrocities.”