

## Speech of departing coordinator Hans Gaasbeek in Brussels, May 25 2018

Dear Colleagues, Dear Friends,

On behalf of the Foundation Day of the Endangered Lawyer, I can say that we are very happy to meet you all again in Brussels, after our very fruitful meeting in this same beautiful chamber in November 2016. Today ELDH and Avvocatti Minaciatti could not be present and we miss the BAR of Paris. They could not be present but they are surely engaged. Lawyers for Lawyers is present through a telephone connection.

I want to thank you all, and of course your organizations, for the great cooperation in the past years, and I want to thank the AED and the VSAN (the Dutch social lawyers organisation) for their good support for my work. The last year was (again) very successful as on the 24<sup>th</sup> of January 2018 we had actions, lawyers and press meetings in 36 cities, in nearly all continents of the world.

Thanks to our great networker, Stuart Russell from IAPL, there were manifestations and forum discussions in 4 cities in Canada. Four lawyer organizations and human rights organizations from West to East Canada worked closely together, to give strong support to the endangered Egyptian colleagues.

In Asia as well, there were new countries involved in the Day, like India, Bangladesh and Taiwan. Also an important meeting was organized in New York.

You can say that the Day of the Endangered Lawyer brings lawyers and lawyer organizations together. The BAR of Geneva sent us an amount (spontaneously) which was very encouraging.

Symone Gaasbeek-Wielinga, the secretary-general of the Foundation Day of the Endangered Lawyer will, after I've finished, speak about the finances and the organizational side of the coordination work, the work that has to be done to make the Day a success.

The Foundation Day of the Endangered Lawyer is erected to strongly support the protection and support for endangered lawyers in an independent and neutral way and to attract donations. We have the status necessary to receive donations free of tax. And there is a Board to supervise the work.

When we look back, we can see in that in the past eight years, we created a huge and strong network with more than 40 international lawyer's organizations and human rights organizations who support the Day.

They are very different in their approach; some are very formal BAR organizations, others are people's lawyers and social lawyers, commercial lawyers and lawyers for the poor.

Our motto, **Keep your hands off the lawyers**, has proved to be very unifying and motivating. Of course, there are very big differences between our supporters, but it is an important challenge to unite all our forces, and to think about the fate of our harassed colleagues.

In many cities, like Paris, Berlin and Brussels, each year many different organizations work together to make the Day a success. I have always tried to create a broad cooperation. I hope this will be continued.

In the summer of last year I announced that I have to stop the coordination work. I am very happy today that Florence de la Pradelle, her colleague Margau, and her daughter are willing to take over the coordination work. And, we received the message that Roberta Taveri and her colleague, both working for the Law Society of England and Wales, are willing to support the coordination team of

Florence and Margau. Florence, together with the AED will be in charge from now and I trust that they will continue the good work for a long time from now.

I leave the job, but I don't say goodbye. I will keep in touch with contacts in countries on which we have focused earlier for the Day as well as in other regions where lawyers are being threatened. And I am sure, we will meet somewhere, sometime.

Thank you very much,

Hans Gaasbeek