



BAR COUNCIL NEWS UPDATE – WEDNESDAY 4 OCTOBER 2017

Death row

[The Guardian](#) - Boris Johnson has been urged by the heads of both branches of the legal profession to call for the release of a Briton who was abducted in Yemen and is now on death row in Ethiopia.

The president of the Law Society, Joe Egan, and the **Chair of the Bar, Andrew Langdon QC**, have written to the foreign secretary to ask him to intervene more forcefully in the case of Andargachew Tsege.

The letter to Johnson from Egan and Langdon says they are very concerned about the situation of Tsege, who is “unlawfully detained on death row”. It points out that he was tried in absentia, without notice and sentenced to death in 2009.

“He was hooded, shackled and rendered at night to Ethiopia where he was held incommunicado for over 50 days and has been detained ever since,” the letter continues.

“We understand that, in three years, he has been permitted a single phone call to his wife and children, and that the UK government has yet to secure effective consular access. Mr Tsege has now been unlawfully held on Ethiopia’s death row for over 1,000 days.”

The legal leaders said that Tsege’s conviction violates international law standards. Their letter to Johnson concludes: “We are deeply concerned about these flagrant violations of a UK citizen’s rights and hope you will make representations to the Ethiopian authorities to ensure that [they] ... release Mr Tsege without delay and enable him to return to the United Kingdom.”

Legal aid

[The Times \(The Brief\)](#) – The Times reports from the Conservative Party Conference that Robert Buckland, QC, the solicitor-general, has said that ministers should increase state funding for early legal advice in some civil law cases.

The solicitor-general said that his personal view was “that the criteria applied by the Legal Aid Agency has been too restrictive and I think that is wrong. There is unfairness that needs to be addressed.”

Buckland’s comments were partially echoed by the Lord Chancellor, David Lidington, who was speaking at another Society of Conservative Lawyers event in Manchester.

The Lord Chancellor also indicated that early advice funding would be given serious consideration in the Ministry of Justice review of the legislation.

Lidington’s remarks were cautiously welcomed by legal profession leaders. **Andrew Langdon, QC, Chair of the Bar**, said that he was encouraged by the comments from the Lord Chancellor and Solicitor-General. “Waiting for the review of LASPO has been a bit like waiting for Godot,” he said.

Wellbeing at the Bar

Law Society Gazette – The Gazette reports that the Bar Council is introducing a Certificate of Recognition to recognise efforts made to promote wellbeing across the Bar, as a way of marking the first anniversary of the Wellbeing at the Bar (WATB) website. Everyone will be able to apply, including chambers, Specialist Bar Associations, Circuits, Inns and organisations that employ barristers. The Certificate will flag good wellbeing practice at the Bar for those who receive it.

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Andargachew Tsege

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Boris Johnson urged to intervene to save Briton on death row in Ethiopia

Heads of Law Society and Bar Council ask foreign secretary to seek release of Andy Tsege, who was kidnapped in 2014

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