

# Society of American Law Teachers SALT

Public Advocacy Center, Room 223

Touro Law Center

225 Eastview Drive, Central Islip NY 11722

631 650 2310

www.saltlaw.org

## Co-Presidents

Raquel Aldana

Steven Bender

## Past Presidents

Norman Dorsen

Howard Lesnick

David Chambers

George Alexander

Wendy Williams

Rhonda R. Rivera

Emma Coleman Jordan

Charles Lawrence

Howard Glickstein

Sylvia Law

Patricia A. Cain

Jean C. Love

Linda Greene

Phoebe Haddon

Stephanie Wildman

Carol Chomsky

Margaret Montoya

Paula Johnson

Michael Rooke-Ley

José Roberto Juárez, Jr.

Holly Maguigan

Eileen Kaufman

Tayyab Mahmud

Margaret Martin Barry

Deborah Waire Post

## Board of Governors

Bryan Adamson

Elvia Arriola

Michael Avery

Margaret Martin Barry

Barbara Bernier

Doug Colbert

Andi Curcio

Benjamin Davis

Jane Dolkart

Olympia Duhart

Nancy Ehrenreich

Patricia Falk

Ruben Garcia

Jackie Gardina

Neil Gotanda

Joan Howarth

Peter Joy

Beth Lyon

Karla McKanders

Adele Morrison

Camille Nelson

Angela Onwuachi-Willig

Hari Osofsky

Ngai Pindell

Deborah Waire Post

Denise Roy

Natsu Taylor Saito

Aviam Soifer

Kellye A. Testy

## Equalizer Editor

Raleigh Levine

## Treasurer

Patricia A. Cain

## CLEA Liaison

Claudia Angelos

## Secretary

Robert Lancaster

## Executive Director

Hazel Weiser

June 2, 2010

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senate  
302 Hart senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510-2303

Dear Senator Klobuchar:

Since 1974, the Society of American Law Teachers (“SALT”) has been an independent organization of law teachers, deans, law librarians, and legal education professionals working to make the profession more inclusive, to enhance the quality of legal education, and to extend the power of legal representation to under-represented individuals and communities. Because of our commitment to the rule of law and to the protection of civil rights and liberties, here and abroad, we feel compelled to intervene when the ability of attorneys and judges to perform their critical roles is threatened.

SALT calls for the immediate release of American law professor Peter Erlinder following his arrest last Friday in Kigali, Rwanda, and withdrawal of the charges against him. We urge the United States government to work with officials in Rwanda to ensure his well-being and to resolve this matter without delay.

Professor Erlinder has been targeted for statements he made in the course of his efforts to provide legal representation to Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza, an opposition candidate who has announced her intent to challenge President Paul Kagame in the upcoming August elections. Erlinder could face 20 years in prison if convicted of violating speech restrictions—restrictions that human rights groups condemn as repressive and that are the focus of Erlinder’s representation of Ingabire herself.

While Professor Erlinder is held in police custody in violation of what people around the world recognize as critical free speech rights, he cannot meet with Madame Ingabire to provide her the legal advice and counsel which are necessary to her defense. Both the Constitution of Rwanda and the Code of Criminal Procedure guarantee a right to legal counsel. Rwanda is also a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, which guarantee an accused party the right to counsel, the right to a fair trial, and the right to prepare a defense on the same footing as the accuser. These rights are fundamental in a

democratic society, yet they ring hollow when lawyers are jailed for speaking on behalf of their clients and the law itself is used to discourage lawyers from taking on politically unpopular clients. A system of justice cannot exist where lawyers are subject to government retaliation based on whom they choose to represent or what they assert in their clients' defense.

President Kagame has an opportunity to further his country's progress towards democracy and the rule of law by releasing Professor Erlinder and withdrawing the charges against him. We are confident the United States government will also make it a priority to expedite Professor Erlinder's release. We and the rest of the world will be watching to ensure that these steps are taken.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Raquel Aldana". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Raquel Aldana  
Co-President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steven Bender". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with the first name being more prominent.

Steven Bender  
Co-President