



The Bar Council

London, 13 May 2020

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I hope this letter finds you and your loved ones well. I would like to express my sympathy to each of you who have been personally affected by the COVID-19 virus. I have been greatly comforted by the expressions of support I have received from around the world.

The pandemic has severely tested us, both personally and as a society, and caused undoubted harm to our professions. It has restricted access to justice in many jurisdictions, and, in some instances, caused a rule of law crisis. So, it is all the more important that our bar associations and members work together to defend these pillars of society. We must speak out when governments take emergency measures in the name of public health, that are not lawful, strictly necessary, proportionate or time-limited. We will always be ready to act in solidarity with you.

It is good to see bar associations exchanging experiences and best practice so we can all make better policy decisions to maintain access to justice. We have benefitted from this sharing of ideas in the crisis, so thank you. It demonstrates the strength of our international bonds which I believe will only grow at this time.

At home, I have been heartened by the speed with which the legal professions, our courts and Government have worked together to provide access to justice by developing innovative online and remote measures.

If you wish to see what we are doing to support our members and ensure that our justice system continues to operate, you can visit <https://www.barcouncil.org.uk/useful-information/coronavirus-advice-and-updates.html>, and please keep sharing with us too.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if there is anything that we can do to support you and your association during these difficult times. I believe that together, we can emerge with a strengthened resolve to defend our mutual values.

I also remain hopeful that I will see some of you at international events, later in the year!

I wish you, your family, friends and colleagues much strength and courage,

**Amanda Pinto QC**

**Chair of the Bar of England and Wales**