

International Law



What is International Law?

International law governs the relationships between nations and the relationships between individuals, companies, and governments that are based in different countries. Public international law refers to laws that govern the relations between governments, including treaties, nautical law, international criminal law, international trade, human rights laws, and immigration laws. Private international law refers to laws that govern the relations between individuals residing in different nations, individuals and foreign companies, and companies based in different nations. Supranational law refers to laws that groups of countries agree to, but do not apply to the international community as a whole (for example laws and agreements of the European Union). International lawyers that work for government or large nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) might propose laws or agreements that are discussed in international legal organizations such as the United Nations. Other international lawyers might represent their clients involved in international disputes or negotiate contracts for international companies. Many international lawyers work on corporate mergers. Most international lawyers specialize in a particular area such as contract, corporate, tax, immigration, or human rights law ([Cornell](#)).

International laws are established and enforced by international organizations. Such organizations have existed in some form since the nineteenth century, but came into their current form after the Second World War. The United Nations was formed in 1945 and has since absorbed other important international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the International Civil Aviation Organization, and the World Health Organization. These organizations adopt agreements that promote peace and stability among nations. They also try to create unified responses to global crises including multistate wars, refugee practices, human rights abuses, pandemics, climate change and related natural disasters, and financial destabilization ([Virzo and Ingravallo](#)).

The primary role of the United Nations is to settle international disputes by peaceful means. The UN accomplishes this by adopting conventions, treaties, and standards. The United Nations also operates the International Court of Justice (ICJ) which considers cases related to diplomatic relations, hostage crises, asylum, and nationality claims. The International Criminal Court (ICC) is not affiliated with the UN and handles cases related to genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. The IJC and the ICC employ judges and prosecutors from around the world ([United Nations](#)).

Where Do International Lawyers Work?

Government

United Nations—[System-wide internship page](#), [Careers](#), [International Law Commission](#), [International Court of Justice](#), [High Commissioner for Refugees](#)
International Criminal Court—[How to Work Here](#)
World Bank—[Jobs](#) and [Internships](#)
International Monetary Fund—[Specialized Career Streams](#)
International Labour Organization—[Employment](#)

Nongovernmental Organizations

International Rescue Committee—[Careers and Internships](#)
Oxfam—[Careers](#)
Human Rights Watch—[Jobs, Internships, and Fellowships](#)
Amnesty International—[Careers, Internships](#)

Private Sector

In-house or outside counsel for companies involved in international disputes or international mergers

International Law Resources



What Classes Should I Take?

If you are interested in human rights and NGO work

Civil Rights
Environmental Law
Immigration Law
Moot Court
Public International Law Seminar

If you are interested in corporate work

Contracts
Corporate Governance and Finance
Corporate Tax
International Business Transactions
International Economic Law
Mergers and Acquisitions
U.S. Taxation of International Law

Resume Boosters for International Law

Participate in Moot Court

Join the International Law Society

Master a foreign language, especially one widely spoken such as French, Spanish, Arabic, or Mandarin

Work or study abroad

Get involved with a local refugee or immigration organization to learn more about these issues

Intern or extern with a firm that handles international law cases or civil rights cases if you are interested in civil and human rights

Intern or extern with a nongovernmental organization

Professional Associations

American Bar Association

All University of Memphis law students have free membership to the [American Bar Association](#). Their website provides routinely updated information and interest-specific career advice. Join different sections to find out what they offer. Check out the [International Law Section](#).

International Association of Lawyers

The [International Association of Lawyers](#) provides networking, professional development, and education materials to international lawyers. [Students may join for a reduced rate while in law school](#).

International Bar Association

Join the [International Bar Association](#) to expand your network and keep up with international legal developments. [Students may join for a reduced rate while in law school](#).

International Law Links

[“Meet Diversity Officer Mark E. Wojcik”](#)

This interview with ABA Diversity Officer Mark E. Wojcik outlines his professional career as an international lawyer. American Bar Association, Fall 2017.

[“Cross-Cultural Learning and Relationships: The Value of International Legal Exchange”](#)

This article provides tips for gaining cross-cultural experience that is useful to international lawyers. American Bar Association, Spring 2017.