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The Inaugural McNair Lecture by Judge Yusuf of the ICJ

Why International Law Matters

“The law no longer falls silent when arms speak”

On 5 May 2022, McNair International hosted Judge Abdulqawi A. Yusuf for his delivery of the Inaugural McNair Lecture, dedicated in honour of the contributions of Lord Arnold McNair to the development of international law, on the theme “Why International Law Matters”. Judge Yusuf has been a Judge of the International Court of Justice since 2009, and served as its President between February 2018 and February 2021.



An audience consisting of ambassadors from countries across the globe, politicians, commercial and international lawyers were present for Judge Yusuf’s address at Lincoln’s Inn Old Hall, London.



Judge Yusuf, one of the world's foremost experts on international law, studied law in Somalia, Florence and Geneva, and served in multiple international organisations, including as Legal Adviser and Director of the Office of International Standards and Legal Affairs at UNESCO, before he was elected to the International Court of Justice.

In his address, Judge Yusuf reminded the audience of the significance of Public International Law, not least in the prevention of armed conflict, and pointed out that since the emergence of the UN System, international armed conflict has been significantly reduced, notwithstanding the events presently taking place.

In the context of the pervasive influence of Public International Law in the realm of commercial transactions, Judge Yusuf noted:

“We all live, whether we like it or not, in a globalized world; a world of total interdependence. We cannot do without mass transportation across borders, mass communications throughout the world, multilateral trade and investment, cultural cooperation among nations, and the protection of cultural and human heritage. But all this requires international legal rules and regulations to enable and facilitate them”.

The event also marks the opening of McNair International's offices in the heart of legal London in Middle Temple. In his closing remarks, [Khawar Qureshi QC](#), Head of McNair International, said:

“Judge Yusuf brilliantly demonstrated how Public International Law has permeated critical aspects of commercial activity and daily life. There will always be points of tension, mainly in terms of the conduct of States. However, even in this regard, the mechanisms for accountability exist and are being used increasingly frequently”.

To view or download the lecture: [click here](#)

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