

I'm Gary Lee. I'm the chair of the Law Society's Human Rights and Equality Committee. I'm a solicitor in the Office of the General Solicitor for Minors and Wards of Court. I've also been managing solicitor of a Community Law Centre in Ballymun and principal solicitor in a national disability organization.

As humans, we all have fundamental rights and freedoms, no matter who we are and where we come from. These human rights include the right to life and liberty, the right not to be subjected to cruel or degrading treatment or torture, and the right to equal recognition before the law. There are socioeconomic rights such as the right to work, social security, education, the right to marry, and so on.

When we think of human rights lawyers, quite often people think of international figures such as Amal Clooney. However, human rights law is practiced every day in Ireland by thousands of Irish solicitors. Solicitors play a significant role in vindicating human rights. We inform clients of the law, advise them, and represent them. Solicitors can use the law to ensure that people have access to basic resources and services. They act in healthcare law, mental health law, social welfare law, housing, discrimination, criminal, and environmental law, to name but a few areas.

If you want to get involved in human rights law and use your skills as a solicitor or as a trainee solicitor to help those who are disadvantaged and marginalized, you can volunteer for FLAC or with Community Law Centres. A lot of firms have also signed up to the Pro Bono Pledge, in which lawyers pledge to promote access to justice and provide pro bono assistance to those in need. Many third-sector organizations are also crying out for solicitors to get on their boards as the whole area of charity law becomes increasingly important.