Proskauer

Supporting Victims of Domestic Violence in Paris

Proskauer For Good on **April 24, 2025**

Salomée Bohbot is an associate in our Paris office and has been involved in pro bono projects relating to domestic abuse since 2020. In this short interview, she discusses her impactful work.

Please describe your pro bono work for victims of domestic violence.

Since 2020, I have volunteered with the Paris Bar's permanent legal consultation service dedicated to victims of domestic violence. I also participate in a collaboration between the Paris Bar and the *Fondation des Femmes*, launched in March 2018. This initiative recognizes that access to free legal advice is an indispensable first step in empowering women to assert their rights, find refuge, and break free from sexual and gender-based violence.

The work involves providing initial legal consultations to victims of domestic violence, explaining their rights, potential legal avenues, and the process of applying for legal aid and protective measures such as restraining orders. The Paris Bar also occasionally appoints me to represent victims before the criminal or civil courts, allowing me to offer more comprehensive legal support throughout their journey.

What kind of issues do you handle?

I assist women who have experienced domestic abuse, including physical, psychological, emotional, and economic abuse. I encounter individuals grappling with the immediate aftermath of violence, who are seeking information on how to secure their safety and often their children's safety as well. I also provide guidance on how to commence legal proceedings to obtain restraining orders, help them understand options for emergency housing, and how to report the abuse to the authorities.

In some instances, I act as the victims' legal representative in criminal proceedings, seeking compensation for the damages they have suffered as a result of the violence. I also represent victims in the civil courts in restraining order applications where I seek to obtain protective measures to restrict the abuser's ability to contact the victim, determine the exercise of parental rights (prioritizing the victim's and children's safety), and secure the allocation of the family home to the victim. These clients are often distressed and vulnerable, which makes my legal expertise even more important to them.

Tell us about a recent highlight and what you took away from the experience.

Recently, I had the opportunity to assist a young mother and her three-month-old baby. For years, she had endured significant psychological and physical violence from her partner but felt unable to take action. However, when the violence endangered her baby for the first time, she felt compelled to seek help. Following her complaint, I was appointed by the Paris Bar to represent her through the criminal proceedings.

The highlight for me was when the Court granted her the damages she sought, even if it did not erase what she had been through. Witnessing her courage in finally taking steps to protect herself and her baby, and seeing her receive a measure of recognition for the harm she endured, was incredibly impactful. I was struck by her extraordinary strength and the vital role access to legal support plays in empowering victims to break free from violence and seek accountability. It reinforced the importance of assisting those who have been silenced for too long and highlighted their unique vulnerability, but it also reminded me of the remarkable resilience of mothers in domestic violence situations.

Why is pro bono work so important to you?

My interest in pro bono work as well as in helping victims of domestic violence stems from my belief in the fundamental right of everyone to safety, dignity, and access to justice. Witnessing the profound impact of violence on individuals and families ignited my desire to use my legal skills to make a tangible difference in victims' lives and my pro bono work allows me to help address a critical societal issue. Domestic violence has devastating consequences, and providing legal assistance to victims is a concrete way to support them in their journey towards safety and healing.

Pro bono is a way to uphold the core values of our profession – to serve the community and ensure that justice is not a privilege but a right accessible to all, regardless of financial circumstances. It also enriches my professional life. Besides the fact that I can wear my robe in Court, which I love doing, it provides me with unique perspectives, strengthens my advocacy skills, and reminds me of the human element at the heart of the law. It is deeply rewarding to witness the resilience of the victims and to play a part in their empowerment. Ultimately, I believe that, as lawyers, we have a responsibility to use our expertise to support the most vulnerable, and my pro bono work in the domestic violence field is a way for me to actively live out that responsibility.

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Related Professionals

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