Multinational corporations face increasing expectations in their overseas treatment of workers, third parties, and other stakeholders. Those expectations are nowhere more visible than in the intersection of business and human rights.

Our lawyers advise companies on the scope and application of the human rights laws and expectations, and defend clients in some of the most prominent Alien Tort Statute (ATS) cases to date. Our practice is worldwide in scope, covering an expansive set of industries and offering clients a broad range of services that include assistance with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs, preventive advice and counseling, litigation and investigations, and legislative assistance and advice. In serving our clients’ needs, Steptoe draws upon the resources of our lawyers in the United States, London, and Brussels who practice in a variety of disciplines, including international trade, compliance & investment, commercial litigation, crisis management, government affairs, and chemical & environmental.

Steptoe lawyers have held prominent positions in the US Department of Justice, the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Department of State, UN criminal tribunals, and other domestic and international bodies. They teach, write, and speak extensively on business and human rights, the ATS, and related areas.

Steptoe’s business and human rights team:

- Assists clients with their CSR programs
- Conducts ATS and human rights risk assessments, audits, and internal investigations
- Develops and implements prevention programs
- Advises clients with respect to the scope and extent of due diligence, risk mitigation, and audits on partners, consultants, representatives, and other third parties
- Counsels and represents buyers and sellers on human rights risks in M&A transactions
- Drafts press responses and public statements, and fields inquiries from and coordinates with foreign and domestic government personnel and NGOs regarding related matters
- Defends clients facing litigation in this area in state and federal courts, as well as in collateral proceedings involving the US Congress and other US agencies
- Counsels clients participating in United Nations complaint dispute procedures
- Identifies and supervises counsel in foreign jurisdictions regarding parallel legal matters involving these issues
Representative Matters

Steptoe served as the counsel of record in:

- Ayemou v. Amvac Chem. Corp., 2008 WL 4107286 (9th Cir. 2008), involving ATS claims against foreign banks, charities and nationals.
- Abagninin v. Amvac Chem. Corp., 545 F.3d 733 (9th Cir. 2008), involving ATS claims against chemical companies, oil company, agricultural companies, and others.

Other representative matters include:

- Steptoe lawyers have been retained to provide legal and strategic advice to multinational companies during crisis situations. We have worked with company executives and foreign counsel to ensure appropriate and reasonable responses by government police and security forces, and minimize exposure to potential litigation.
- Steptoe has been retained by multinational companies to review discrete and systemic scenarios, assess the extant risks of ATS litigation, and devise effective preventive strategies.
- Steptoe lawyers have undertaken and overseen internal investigations into physical injuries and deaths that have occurred on or around clients’ premises. That has included fact and information gathering, consultation with forensic experts, advice to management regarding interactions with local governments, and assistance in strategic communications.
- Steptoe has represented individual corporate officers in litigation involving ATS claims arising out company relationships and interactions with security forces.

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Primary Contacts
John O'Connor
Lucinda A. Low
Brittany Prelogar