



## UN Human Rights Council, 50th session

### Agenda Item 3

### Interactive Dialogue with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers

20 June 2022

#### Statement of the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute

The IBAHRI welcomes the Rapporteur's exhaustive and timely report. All persons exercising legal functions are fundamental to the defense and consolidation of the rule of law. A free and independent legal profession is indispensable to the protection of all human rights.

However, we note concerning trends of lawyers being increasingly targeted simply for performing their duties, with states often the source of these threats. In particular, lawyers are prosecuted and persecuted when dealing with human rights issues or politically sensitive cases, legally representing human rights defenders or peaceful protesters. Legislation, including national security and counter-terror laws, is systematically misused to silence and intimidate lawyers, provoking a chilling effect and preventing legal defense and access to justice to human rights activists or political opponents.

Concerning cases have been recorded globally. Just to mention a few recent examples - a **Hong Kong** barrister who provided legal assistance to human rights activists and protesters was recently arrested; in **Belarus**, three lawyers were arbitrarily arrested in just a few days; and in **Russia**, since last February, lawyers have been physically attacked for defending clients arrested in peaceful anti-war protests.

The current report demonstrates the extent and implications of such attacks as a weapon to silence civil society and human rights. This issue requires urgent and special attention. A comprehensive and coordinated response should also come from this Council. We urge this Council to mainstream the protection and independence of the legal profession, to promote and use the Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, and to act swiftly to address the issues raised by the Special Rapporteur.

This statement was delivered by:

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