



Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations



Organization: Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada
Item 3: Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers
Date: 26 June 2023
Speaker: Gavin Magrath

Oral Statement to the 53rd Session of the UN Human Rights Council from Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC), International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI), Lawyers for Lawyers (L4L), and The Law Society of England and Wales, NGOs in special consultative status, endorsed by the Colombian Caravana, NGO without consultative status

Colombia: Threats and murder of human rights lawyers and defenders

Mr. President,

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada, the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, and Lawyers for Lawyers, and The Law Society of England and Wales, with endorsement by the Colombian Caravana, welcome the Special Rapporteur's emphasis on reimagining the rule of law, including the role of the legal profession in ensuring access to justice.¹

We reiterate our shared concern about the systematic arbitrary detention of lawyers in China, Turkey, and Iran, and impunity for attacks and murders of lawyers in the Philippines.

In Colombia, human rights lawyers are at heightened risk within the context of the escalation of violence against human rights defenders. Colombia has the highest murder rate of defenders in the world.² Judges, justice operators, and lawyers are among those suffering threats and murder with woeful lack of meaningful protection by the State.

We ask the Council to urge all States to fulfil their obligations under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, human rights treaties, and the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, and to urge Colombia to fully implement the 2016 Peace Agreement and the recommendations of the OHCHR and the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights. We also recommend that the Council support the Colombian human rights community's petition for a reopening of the International Criminal Court's preliminary examination of the situation in Colombia.

Thank you, Mr. President.

¹ Reimagining justice: confronting contemporary challenges to the independence of judges and lawyers - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, A/HRC/53/31, 13 April 2023, available at: <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/53/31>.

² Colombian Caravana, Confronting Impunity: Protect Lawyers and Judicial Independence, International Caravana of Jurists, May 2023, available at: <https://www.lrwc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Colombian-Caravan-Report-Final-EN.pdf>.