

Organization: The Law Society

Item 3: Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers

Date: 26 June 2023

Speaker: Petra Stojnic

Oral Statement to the 53rd Session of the UN Human Rights Council from The Law Society of England and Wales, NGO in special consultative status

## **Halt the arbitrary arrest, detention and ill-treatment of lawyers in Iran**

Mr President,

The Law Society of England and Wales appreciates the opportunity to interact with the Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers and echoes her concerns about the widespread and increasing attacks on lawyers for their work. Lawyers increasingly face threats, intimidation, physical attacks, arbitrary detention, prosecution, and even torture and killings for carrying out their professional duties to uphold the law and to defend the rights of their clients. Between 2010 and 2020, more than 2,500 lawyers were killed, detained, or kidnapped in different regions of the world.<sup>1</sup> Such targeting and incursions on the independence of the legal profession amount to a serious assault on human rights, rule of law, and access to justice.

In Iran, lawyers have faced arbitrary arrest, detention, and ill-treatment since the nation-wide protests triggered by the death of Mahsa Amini at the hands of the morality police in September 2022. At least 129 lawyers have faced arrests and summonses, “due to reasons ranging from practicing their profession to expressing opinions on social media”.<sup>2</sup> At least 70 lawyers have been arrested,<sup>3</sup> and at least 16 lawyers have been sentenced to prison. The majority of those arrested have been temporarily released on bail pending the conclusion of legal proceedings. Since April 2023, more than 100 lawyers from across the country have been summoned to the Evin Prison’s Prosecutor’s Office without specific charges to sign a commitment letter expressing regret for the nationwide protests and agreeing with a strategy to limit contact with “networks outside the country”.<sup>4</sup>

Lawyers in Iran are subjected to systemic persecution for their instrumental role in the fight for democracy and in defending human rights, including women’s rights in the country. The Law Society remains concerned about the situation of lawyers in Iran and around the world, which requires urgent and ongoing attention from the international community.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://independence-judges-lawyers.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/DGS-Report.-Lawyers.-English.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.en-hrana.org/report-highlights-129-instances-of-security-and-judicial-encounters-with-attorneys-in-the-last-ten-months/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://defendlawyers.files.wordpress.com/2023/06/obsav-special-iran-2023.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.rferl.org/a/iran-lawyers-courts-summons-protests/32429530.html>