



Human Rights  
Institute

UN Human Rights Council 53<sup>rd</sup> Session

*Agenda Item 4 : Interactive Dialogue with the High-Commissioner on the Situation of Human Rights In Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela*

Oral Statement

The International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute and Lawyers for Lawyers welcome the UN High Commissioner's report on the human rights situation in Venezuela.

We express concerns at the persistent attacks on the legal profession and legal institutions in Venezuela.

Judicial independence is an essential pillar of the rule of law, key to the effective functioning of democracy. We condemn the government's undermining of the separation of powers. The interference of the executive in the judiciary is shown by instability of tenure, the arbitrary appointment and removal of judges. Many judges operate under the threat of reprisals.

The executive branch uses the judiciary as an instrument of repression and control, which significantly restricts the actions lawyers can take to perform their professional duties and enforce their clients' rights. Lawyers have also been subject to criminal proceedings, by association with the clients they represent, in breach of the UN Basic Principles on the role of lawyers.

Prosecutors and judges in Venezuela are not only failing to investigate human rights violations against opponents of the State but are actively participating in violations against them, with impunity.

We call on the High Commissioner and this Council to:

- Continue monitor interference of the executive branch in the Venezuelan judicial system, and
- Monitor all actions aimed at limiting the independent and safe exercise of the legal profession, including the undue criminalization of lawyers.

*This statement was delivered by:*

*Francesca Restifo*  
*Senior Human Rights Lawyer and UN Representative*  
*International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute*  
[francesca.restifo@int-bar.org](mailto:francesca.restifo@int-bar.org)