



Human Rights
Institute

Organisation: Lawyers for Lawyers
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HRC section: 55th session (Agenda Item 6)
Speaker: Ms Tara Fiechter

**Oral Statement to the 55th session of the UN Human Rights Council Regular Session –
Item 6: UPR Outcomes: Russian Federation**

Mr President,

Lawyers for Lawyers¹, The international Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI) continue to be deeply concerned about the deteriorating human rights situation in the Russian Federation. We deplore that the Russian Federation accepted none of the recommendations made pertaining to the rights of lawyers at its 4th UPR.

Protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms requires effective access to legal services provided by an independent legal profession. A justice system that provides due process for rights holders and allows lawyers to work independently without fear of harassment or intimidation, is fundamental to advancing human rights.

Lawyers in the Russian Federation working on sensitive cases are subjected to attempts by investigative authorities to harass and disrupt their work. Lawyers face threats, intimidation, and (physical) attacks in connection with their legitimate work. In addition, some lawyers are subjected to criminal or disciplinary proceedings related to their professional legal duties, resulting in disbarment or lengthy prison sentences.

Authorities in these cases have failed to carry out prompt and thorough investigations into the threats and attacks. Impunity of these acts have a severe "chilling effect", resulting in lawyers refusing to represent clients in sensitive cases, out of fear of becoming the target of harassment. This severely compromises the universal right to effective legal representation and access to justice for all.

National legislation unduly restricts the exercise of democratic human rights, including the rights of lawyers. The 'foreign agents' law, 'undesirable organisation' law, as well as censorship laws, which have been heavily criticised by various international institutions, are increasingly

¹ [Lawyers for Lawyers](#) is an independent and non-political Dutch foundation which seeks to promote the proper functioning of the rule of law by pursuing freedom and independence of the legal profession. We do this by supporting lawyers worldwide who are threatened or suppressed in the execution of their profession. Lawyers for Lawyers was granted Special Consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council in July 2013.

and wrongfully being applied to lawyers and lawyers' organisations. This makes it virtually impossible to continue practising law in the Russian Federation.

In this regard, whilst we would welcome the Russian Federation's stated commitment to fulfilling its obligation to promote civil and political rights, these words will continue to ring hollow unless the government repeals or reforms legislation designed to restrict these rights – recommendations it has explicitly refused to accept.

We therefore urge the Russian Federation to reconsider and accept the recommendations pertaining the rights of lawyers and to take immediate measures to prevent any harassment against lawyers effectively, publicly condemn them at all levels and promptly and thoroughly investigate them to end impunity.

Thank you.