



Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada
NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

**63rd Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council
22 September 2026**

**Item 4: Interactive Dialogue with the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the
Russian Federation**

Joint Oral Statement

The International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, the International Commission of Jurists and Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada believe that the work of the Special Rapporteur is vital to addressing the crackdown on human rights in Russian Federation.

We deplore the continuing erosion of the independence of the legal profession in Russia and the systematic targeting of lawyers for carrying out their professional duties. State authorities have systematically used prosecution, arbitrary disciplinary measures, disbarment, detention and severe punishment to intimidate lawyers and undermine their essential role in upholding human rights, the rule of law and ensure access to justice.

The designation of lawyers as "foreign agents" further obstructs their legitimate professional activity.

[In 2025, at least 133 lawyers reportedly faced criminal charges](#), an increase of over 50 per cent compared with five years earlier.

We are concerned that the 2024 amendments to the law "On Advocacy and the Legal Profession" further expand the Ministry of Justice's administrative and disciplinary powers over the profession.

In May 2026, upon request of the Ministry of Justice, a [court](#) overrode the Moscow Bar refusal and terminated the status of three prominent lawyers arguing that they lived outside Russia for more than a year "without valid reason".

These developments form part of a broader assault on independent institutions and civil society. We, therefore, urge the Council to renew the Special Rapporteur's mandate.

This statement was delivered by:

Francesca Restifo, Senior Human Rights Lawyer and UN Representative
International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)
francesca.restifo@int-bar.org