



The Law Society
of England and Wales

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

Human Rights
Institute

United Nations Human Rights Council, 48th Session

Agenda Item 4

Interactive dialogue on the interim oral update of OHCHR on the situation of human rights in Belarus

24 September 2021

Joint Oral Statement

The International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, Lawyers for Lawyers, The Law Society of England and Wales and Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada remain deeply concerned that, since this Council mandated the OHCHR Examination, the human rights situation in Belarus has further deteriorated with ongoing persecution and repression of legal professionals, journalists, human rights defenders, and political opponents.

The Belarusian authorities continue to use unfounded criminal proceedings against them. At least 23 lawyers have been disbarred since 2020. More than 200 NGOs and media organisations have been shut down or are in the process thereof. 28 journalists are currently detained.

We strongly condemn the recent sentencing of opposition figure Maria Kolesnikova and lawyer Maxim Znak to 11- and 10-years imprisonment respectively, following a closed-door trial.

We further condemn recent reports that death row prisoner Viktor Skrundzik has been executed and urge Belarus to introduce a moratorium on the death penalty with a view to abolition.

Madame President,

This Council must take all possible actions to ensure accountability for abuses and prevent further deterioration of the situation.

We call on this Council to fully support the OHCHR Examination and the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights Situation in Belarus, through adequate funding and resources, and to operationalise the OHCHR Examination without further delay.

We thank you

This statement was delivered by:
Francesca Restifo
Senior Human Rights Lawyer – UN Representative
International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute
Francesca.Restifo@int-bar.org