

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations



The Law Society
of England and Wales



LAWYERS FOR
LAWYERS

Organization: Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada
Item: Item 3: General debate on civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development
Date: 22 September 2021
Speaker: Catherine Morris

Oral Statement to the 48th Session of the UN Human Rights Council from Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC), NGO in special consultative status

Iran and Turkey: Systematic attacks on lawyers denies the right to legal representation

Mme. President,

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada, Lawyers for Lawyers, the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, and the Law Society of England and Wales are concerned that Iran and Turkey are systematically criminalizing and imprisoning lawyers as a strategy to deny human rights defenders and political opponents their right under the ICCPR to independent, effective legal representation.¹

In Iran, for example, lawyers Mr. Amirsalar Davoudi and Ms. Nasrin Sotoudeh have been subjected to arbitrary arrests, unfair trials, lengthy prison sentences, and ill-treatment, including prolonged solitary confinement and denial of adequate medical care.²

Turkey's hostile environment for lawyers and defenders,³ especially since 2016, includes arbitrary arrests, illegitimate charges, unfair trials, harsh jail sentences, and ill-treatment, in disregard for the most basic principles of the rule of law. Turkey's judicial and administrative harassment of the legal profession also includes denial of practicing licenses to future generations of lawyers and law students engaged in human rights work.⁴

We urge the Council to call on Iran and Turkey to immediately and unconditionally release all those detained for performing their lawful work as lawyers and defenders and to ensure they are able to carry out their duties without interference, intimidation or reprisals.⁵

Thank you, Mme. President.

¹ UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, 16 December 1966, Article 14(3)(b), available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>.

² Center for Human Rights in Iran, "List of Attorneys Imprisoned in Iran for Defending Human Rights," updated 18 August 2021, available at: <https://iranhumanrights.org/2020/06/list-of-attorneys-imprisoned-in-iran-for-defending-human-rights/>.

³ Netherlands Helsinki Committee, "Who will defend the defenders in Turkey?," 18 August 2021, available at, <https://www.openglobalrights.org/who-will-defend-the-defenders-in-turkey/>; New York City Bar, "Condemnation of the Turkish Government's Attack on Lawyers, Judges, and Bar Associations in Turkey," 16 July 2020, available at: <https://www.nycbar.org/media-listing/media/detail/opposing-turkish-government-attacks-on-lawyers>.

⁴ Concerns about access to the legal profession and increasing disbarments of lawyers in Turkey, Joint statement of AIJA , UIA-IROL, IBAHRI, Lawyers for Lawyers, LRWC, LSEW, and the Netherlands Helsinki Committee, available at: <https://www.lrwc.org/turkey-concerns-about-access-to-the-legal-profession/>.

⁵ United Nations, *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers*, 7 September 1990, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/roleoflawyers.aspx>