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.


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/](https://www.lrwc.org/turkey-concerns-about-access-to-the-legal-profession/).