

Organization: Lawyers for Lawyers
Item: 4
Date: 5 July 2023
Speaker: Noa Guldemon

Oral Statement to the 53rd Session of the UN Human Rights Council from Lawyers for Lawyers (L4L), Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada, The Law Society, and the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI) NGOs in special consultative status.

Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus

Mr President,

We continue to be deeply concerned about the deteriorating human rights situation in Belarus. We deplore the ongoing pattern of arrests and reprisals against lawyers and human rights defenders in Belarus. Persecution of lawyers undermines people's right to legal representation to seek remedies for violations.

Since the 2020 elections, Belarusian lawyers have been persecuted by means including arbitrary disbarment, arbitrary arrests and detentions, illegitimate prosecutions, or even being listed as terrorists, merely for performing their legitimate professional duties.

These forms of unlawful intimidation create a chilling effect on other legal professionals, restricting human rights defenders' and political opponents' right to access independent, effective legal representation.

More than 100 lawyers have been deprived of the right to practise law for politically motivated reasons. More than 300 lawyers ceased their practise of law as a result of changes in legislation on the bar, which established strict state control at all levels, resulting in de facto elimination of the independence of the legal profession in Belarus.

We concur with the Special Rapporteur's recommendation that Belarus immediately halt its persecution of lawyers and ensure their protection in accordance with international law and standards including the Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers and urge continued monitoring of the situation of the legal profession in Belarus.

Thank you.