



Organization: Lawyers for Lawyers

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Speaker: Marije Pricker

Oral Statement to the 139th Session of the UN Human Rights Committee from Lawyers for Lawyers.

Iran: Threats to the independence of the legal profession

Dear Chair, Excellencies, members of the Human Rights Committee, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Lawyers for Lawyers wishes to bring to the Committee's attention to the failure of the authorities of Iran to uphold the necessary guarantees for the proper functioning of the legal profession.

Lawyers play a vital role in the protection of the rule of law and human rights. It is the responsibility of lawyers to protect and establish the rights of citizens in whatever quarter they may be threatened. Their work is indispensable for ensuring effective access to justice for all. To fulfil their professional duties effectively, lawyers should be able to practice law freely and independently, without any fear of reprisal.

Lawyers in Iran face a "unpredictable and repressive environment".^[1] Lawyers defending human rights cases are subject of systematic and widespread arbitrary arrests, unfair trials, prolonged arbitrary detention, and ill-treatment.^[2] Since the outbreak of the protests after Mahsa Amini's death in 2022, at least 66 lawyers have been arbitrarily detained, many facing overly broad national security charges.^[3] Reportedly, lawyers are forced by Iran's prosecutor offices to sign promissory notes that limit their professional activities, such as educating Iranian citizens about their right to defense. Consequently, lawyers have become more careful taking up cases of protestors.

Moreover, recent legislation passed by the parliament limits the independence of the Iranian Bar Association and grants the Ministry of Economy authority for issuing, extending, and revoking attorney licenses.

Lawyers for Lawyers urges the Human Rights Committee to call on Iranian authorities to immediately take steps to provide, in practice, effective protection to lawyers, and refrain from taking any measures that may constitute harassment or persecution or undue interference in the exercise of their work.

Thank you.