



**55th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council  
Agenda Item 6: UPR Outcomes: Colombia**

22 March 2024

**Oral Statement**

Mr. President,

Lawyers for Lawyers welcomes the decision of Colombia to accept many of the recommendations concerning the protection of human rights defenders, including lawyers, and the effective investigation into the attacks and threats against them.<sup>1</sup> We call upon Colombia to effectively implement them without delay.

Lawyers for Lawyers continues to be concerned about the increasing number of reported threats and attacks against human rights lawyers in Colombia. When representing their clients, lawyers have seen continued harassment in the form of verbal intimidation, threatening phone calls, physical and social media threats, and incidents of physical and verbal assault. These attacks, predominantly perpetrated by third parties, are met with insufficient government action to prevent, or address them effectively.

Furthermore, it has been reported that lawyers have been subject to unlawful surveillance activities carried out by the Colombian National Army, which threaten their security, work, and personal lives. In some cases, this had led to assassination attempts and murders.

Lawyers play a vital role in the protection of the rule of law and human rights. 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.

Therefore, we urge Colombia to promptly implement adequate safeguards, both in law and in practice, to ensure the effective protection of lawyers from any form of retaliation in connection to their professional activities.

We also call upon the Colombian authorities to cease any harassment of lawyers and avoid any undue interferences in their work, such as illegal surveillance. Lastly, we urge Colombia to immediately adopt measures guaranteeing the prompt, effective, and independent investigation of all human rights violations against human rights defenders, including lawyers, and hold them accountable.

Thank you.

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<sup>i</sup> Addendum to the Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review of Colombia, 16 February 2024, A/HRC/55/7/Add.1.

*Supported recommendations:*

116.37 Consider a reform of the national model of protection for human rights defenders, developed in collaboration with defenders and civil society, in order to strengthen prevention, collective protection and differentiated means of support for defenders, depending on their specific needs (Kingdom of the Netherlands).

116.59 Strengthen the protection of human rights defenders, ex-combatants and other vulnerable groups, and ensure impartial, rigorous and effective investigation of cases of violence, intimidation and reprisals (Ireland);

116.60 Take further measures to prevent acts of violence, threats, intimidation and reprisals against human rights defenders and ensure that all allegations of such acts are investigated (Luxembourg);

116.74 Take urgent steps to ensure prompt, independent and impartial investigations into allegations of attacks and threats against human rights defenders and social leaders and their communities, and bring to justice all those responsible (Switzerland);

116.80 Improve protection of human rights defenders and social leaders by ensuring that judicial authorities conduct a prompt and impartial investigation into violations against human rights defenders and advance investigations of these crimes (Finland);

116.91 Take additional and effective measures to prevent acts of attacks, threats, intimidation and reprisals against human rights defenders and to hold to account the perpetrators of such acts (Slovenia);