



Human Rights  
Institute

## 57<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council

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Item 4: Interactive Dialogue with the UN Special rapporteur on the Human Rights Situation in the Russian Federation

### Oral Statement

The International Bar Association, Lawyers for Lawyers and lawyers' Rights watch Canada thank the Special Rapporteur for her comprehensive report. We condemn widespread and escalating attacks on independent lawyers in Russia, including judicial harassment, arbitrary disciplinary actions, disbarments, and criminal charges. Lawyers are repeatedly labelled "foreign agents", simply for performing their legal duties and defending the rule of law and face severe pressure, including prosecution and physical violence amounting to torture and ill-treatment.<sup>1</sup>

We are extremely concerned about the law "On Advocacy and the Legal Profession" aiming at expanding the Ministry of Justice's oversight of the legal profession through centralized administrative control, including the power to impose disciplinary sanctions.

We are further concerned about amendments to the Law on State Secrets, imposing notification of departure on lawyers with access to broadly defined sensitive information. This severely limits their ability to leave the country, especially when facing prosecution.

We condemn the arbitrary detention of the three lawyers who represented Aleksei Navalny, currently facing charges of extremism<sup>2</sup> and we urge Russia to release them unconditionally.

In this context it is imperative to maintain rigorous monitoring on Russia. We therefore urge this Council to renew the mandate of the Special Rapporteur and ensure additional resources necessary to fulfil its role. We call on Russia to end any persecution and prosecution of lawyers.

*This statement was delivered by:*

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur (15 September 2023), paragraph 95: "Contrary to these standards, lawyers who have voiced dissenting views and/or represented human rights defenders, journalists, opposition activists, anti-war protesters or victims of human rights violations in the Russian Federation have come under severe pressure themselves. This pressure includes disciplinary, administrative and criminal harassment and prosecution, and physical violence amounting to torture and ill-treatment, as seen in the cases of the Agora International Human Rights Group, and lawyers Galina Arapova, Maria Bontsler, Alexei Baranovsky, Mikhail Benyash, Bakhrom Khamroev, Ivan Pavlov and Dmitry Talantov."

<sup>2</sup> The law on extremism: According to Special Rapporteur's report - "Federal Law No. 114-FZ of 25 July 2002 "on counteracting extremist activity" is part of a very complex set of regulations used to prosecute extremism"