

## Joint oral statement to Human Rights Council on Venezuela

On 20 September 2024, Lawyers for Lawyers, the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, and the Law Society of England and Wales, delivered an oral statement during the interactive dialogue with the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The dialogue took place during the 57<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council.

The statement reads as follows:

*Lawyers for Lawyers, the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, and the Law Society of England and Wales, thank the Fact-Finding Mission for their work and reporting on the situation in Venezuela.*

*We share the concerns about the increasing number of reported arrests and detentions following the contested Venezuelan election. We are alarmed about the numerous reports of a widespread and systematic denial of the right to a fair trial and to an effective defence during criminal proceedings. Lawyers have expressed that they are repeatedly refused access to their clients in detention and to their case files. Additionally, detainees are being denied the right to a legal counsel of their own choosing, as the State arbitrarily assigns lawyers who often fail to provide effective and independent legal representation.*

*We are further alarmed by the reported arbitrary detentions and criminal prosecution of lawyers following their attempt to provide legal assistance, as well as the annulment of their passports to bar them from leaving the country.*

*Access to legal services provided by an independent legal profession is fundamental to the rule of law and an effectively functioning justice system. Lawyers must be able to work independently without fear of harassment, intimidation, or improper interference, as reiterated in the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers. We call on the Council to respond robustly to the ever-worsening situation in Venezuela and urge Venezuela to ensure the effective protection of lawyers from any form of retaliation in connection to their professional activities.*

Find the PDF [here](#).