

## INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS

## ACTION NEWS

## Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

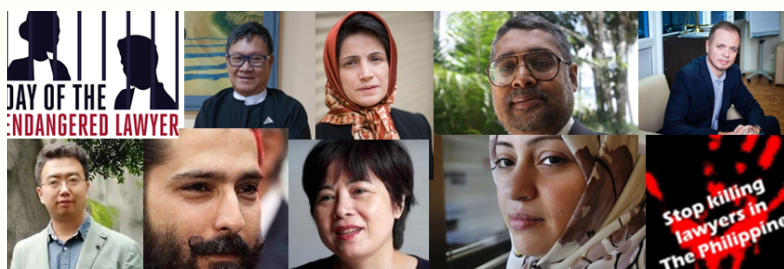
NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

Promoting human rights by protecting those who defend them

## MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**Defending defenders and truth-tellers is fundamental to the rule of law**

The right of access to remedies for human rights violations has been a central theme in the work of Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC) during 2021. Lawyers and human rights defenders are on the front lines, reporting evidence of violations and seeking remedies for those violations. Equality of access to justice is fundamental to the rule of law and requires independence of judges and lawyers, integrity of legal systems, and laws that respect and implement international human rights law. Lawyers and human rights defenders have the right to publicly report human rights violations and to advocate remedies without fear of reprisals and retaliation.



Some of the lawyers &amp; defenders featured in this edition

***The ultimate denial of access to justice***

The ultimate denial of access to justice and remedies arises in countries where abuses are so grave, systematic or widespread that they amount to crimes against humanity or genocide ("atrocities crimes"). The victims of human rights violations and atrocity crimes have the right to truth about what happened where, when, and how, and who participated, and for what reasons. Sadly, the exposure of truths about State-sponsored atrocity crimes is generally accompanied by official denials and silencing or persecution of dissenters and truth-tellers.

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## NEWS AND UPDATES

SUMMER 2021  
APRIL - JUNE 2021

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***Executive Director's message, continued***

LRWC volunteers have been addressing situations in several countries where there have been allegations of crimes against humanity or genocide, including China, Myanmar, the Philippines, Colombia, the United States (US), and Canada. LRWC monitors are also focusing increasing attention on Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, where lawyers and human rights defenders suffer grave risks and systematic violations.

Systemic issues of ongoing violations based in colonial legacies of slavery, colonial rule and racial discrimination have become agonizingly evident all over the world, including in the US and Canada, with revelations of systemic impunity for police violence and other forms of discrimination against Black people and Indigenous Peoples, as well as discrimination against people of Asian descent and other racialized ethnic and religious communities. In Canada, the revelations of unmarked graves of children who disappeared from Canada's residential institutions for Indigenous children have shocked Canadians into unprecedented awareness of the credibility and gravity of claims of crimes against humanity and genocide made by Indigenous truth-tellers against authorities and churches in Canada.

***Demand for LRWC advocacy requires dramatically increased funding***

While LRWC is volunteer-run, the demand for well-informed advocacy, grounded in solid research, has outstripped our capacity to respond effectively without dramatically increased funding. To maintain independence, LRWC relies on membership revenues and private donations from lawyers and other supporters. LRWC does not seek or accept funding from government or business corporations. I encourage all readers to add LRWC to their list of regular donations so that we can continue the work in 2022 and beyond.

**Catherine Morris**  
Executive Director, LRWC

**COUNTRIES OF CONCERN****ALGERIA****Algeria: Lawyers targeted in escalation of crackdown on fundamental rights.**

LRWC joined with several other NGOs led by Lawyers for Lawyers in a 9 July 2021 joint statement of concern about attacks against lawyers in Algeria representing persons from the Hirak pro-democracy movement. As of 30 June 2021 there were more than 300 prisoners of conscience in Algeria, and more than 6,400 peaceful protesters have been arrested in connection with the Hirak pro-democracy protest movement. There is also a trend toward prosecuting human rights defenders, peaceful protesters and journalists on the basis of unfounded terrorism charges.

Human rights lawyer Abderraouf Arslane, a representative of the Collective for the Defence of Hirak Detainees, is being prosecuted on terrorism-related charges that appear to be linked to his work as a human rights lawyer. He was arrested on 26 May while he was in court representing a Hirak activist and is currently in pre-trial detention charged with the same offence as his client. LRWC is continuing to monitor this situation in cooperation with Lawyers for Lawyers.

**AZERBAIJAN**

Azerbaijan lawyers were the focus of attention of the coalition of the 2021 Day of the Endangered Lawyer on 24 January 2021. ... 3

**JOIN LRWC**

LRWC is a committee of lawyers and other human rights defenders who promote human rights, the rule of law, and protection of human rights defenders through advocacy, research and education. Please consider becoming a member of LRWC for \$50/year (\$15 students), and help support our work.

**Visit <https://www.lrwc.org/join/>**

~ Yes ~  
I'd like to donate to  
**Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada**

***Azerbaijan, continued...***

Led by the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute and Lawyers for Lawyers, LRWC co-sponsored an oral statement to the UN Human Rights Council on 28 June 2021 which pointed out that in Azerbaijan "emergency measures adopted under the guise of containing the spread of COVID-19 have been used to limit the already compromised independence of lawyers. Amendments to the law on the legal profession have been used to prevent qualified human rights lawyers from becoming admitted as practising members of the Azerbaijan Bar Association and to disbar those who had been admitted.

**BELARUS****Belarus: Increased harassment and attacks on independence of lawyers in 2020-2021**

Harassment of lawyers in Belarus increased in 2020 during the crackdown on protesters in the aftermath of the August 2020 election. Pressure on lawyers has continued in 2021. LRWC joined Lawyers for Lawyers (L4L) in a joint statement to the UN Human Rights Council on 5 July 2021 expressing concern about arrests of lawyers after the 2020 election and that many arrested persons were denied access to lawyers. The statement also expressed concern about an increase in disbarments of lawyers who represent opposition figures and protesters or speak out about the rule of law, administration of justice, and human rights.

***Belarus, continued...***

The statement asked the Human Rights Council to urge the Belarus government to halt harassment of lawyers and to repeal amendments to the Law on the Bar and Advocacy that restrict independence of the legal profession as a whole. LRWC also joined another joint statement to the Human Rights Council by a group of NGOs which raised the concern that the COVID-19 pandemic was used in Belarus to create legislation to intimidate dissenting voices, approving systematic human rights violations.

**CAMBODIA****Cambodia: COVID-19 measures must respect, protect, and fulfil human rights**

In April 2021, the government of Cambodia applied harsh lockdown measures in COVID-19 "red zones" in several parts of Cambodia. A humanitarian and human rights crisis resulted from the lockdown, including household food insecurity, hunger, and severe financial hardships. Authorities used threats, arrests, and violence to suppress peaceful dissent and protest, and to block reports about the situation in red zones. Civil society groups and UN agencies were denied access to the red zones. After significant international pressure, the lock-downs were eased on 20 May 2021.

On 7 June 2021, LRWC issued a statement urging Cambodia to review all COVID-19 laws, decrees, policies, institutions, and actions and review them to ensure compliance with international human rights law. Cambodia has a lengthy history of harassing journalists, community activists, and human rights defenders who report violations, inequalities, or gaps in rights protection.

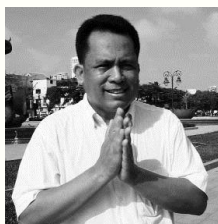
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**Visit <https://www.lrwc.org/join/>**

~ Yes ~  
I'd like to donate to  
Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

## **Cambodia: No Justice 5-years after the murder of human rights defender Kem Ley**



On the fifth anniversary of the unlawful killing of political commentator and human rights defender Kem Ley, LRWC joined 45 organizations in a statement calling for the Cambodian authorities to create an independent Commission of Inquiry tasked with conducting an independent, impartial and effective investigation into Kem Ley's death. To date, the Cambodian government has consistently failed to achieve justice for Kem Ley and his family.

On 10 July 2016, against a backdrop of escalating attacks on civil society and the political opposition in the country, Kem Ley was shot in a café at a petrol station in central Phnom Penh. A suspect was quickly identified, but there has never been an a thorough, independent, impartial or effective investigation as required by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Cambodia is a party, and the revised Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death (2016).

## **CANADA**

### **Canada must ensure independent investigation of all undocumented deaths of Indigenous children**

In the aftermath of discoveries of the remains of children in unmarked graves near former institutions for Indigenous children in several locations in Canada, LRWC joins the calls to Canadian authorities to ensure a prompt, thorough, independent and impartial investigation of the circumstances of all undocumented deaths with full respect for the families and communities of the victims. This principle also applies to the numerous unsolved cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

Canada must ensure immediate and complete production of all relevant documentation in the possession of all relevant governmental, religious, or other entities that can shed light on undocumented deaths and missing persons.

### ***Canada, continued...***

Given the historical lack of confidence in investigations by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and other Canadian authorities, LRWC calls for a fully independent inquiry as required by international human rights law and standards set out in the UN Minnesota Protocol, directed by representatives chosen by Indigenous Peoples in accordance with their own procedures. LRWC volunteers are currently engaged in examination of Canada's specific duties under international human rights law as they relate to the deaths of Indigenous children in Canada's former residential institutions.



**Kamloops Indian Residential School, circa 1930**

LRWC has also called on Canadian authorities and institutions to ensure their full cooperation with international human rights bodies, including UN human rights mechanisms and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). So far, Canada has failed to create a concrete plan to fulfil 2019 requests by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the IACHR to implement the June 2019 recommendations of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG Inquiry), which found that the crimes amounted to the crime of genocide by Canada as a State. Canada should also fully cooperate with any preliminary examination that may be undertaken by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) pursuant to a 3 June 2021 communication to the ICC by several lawyers in Calgary.

LRWC has long been concerned about Canada's persistent failure to uphold the internationally protected rights of Indigenous Peoples. Canada has failed to implement numerous recommendations of UN bodies, including recommendations of the UN Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

LRWC continues to call on Canada to ensure prompt action to implement the 2015 Calls to Action of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, including implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), pursuant to Canadian law in force as of 21 June 2021. LRWC also calls on Canada to immediately create a concrete national action plan to implement the 2019 recommendations of the MMIWG Inquiry in consultation with Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous women's organizations.



## Canada: Allegations of discrimination in U of T hiring process for International Human Rights Program



University of Toronto Faculty of Law

LRWC welcomed the June 2021 decision of the University of Toronto (U of T) Faculty of Law to reopen the competition to hire a director of its International Human Rights Program (IHRP) after months of controversy over allegations of improper external pressure and interference in the recruitment process during 2020. The Faculty of Law has indicated “it has a ‘preferred candidate’ in mind for the job based on last year’s search... but that legally it must open the job up to other applicants.”

In September 2020, the Dean of the Law School, then Edward M. Iacobucci, was alleged to have interfered in the U of T’s hiring committee’s summer 2020 decision to hire international human rights scholar Dr. Valentina Azarova after a verbal offer and acceptance were made, and after both the University and Dr. Azarova had taken steps to implement the agreement.

A donor to the University, Federal Court Judge David Spiro, allegedly expressed concern to the Dean about Dr. Azarova’s research on international human rights and international humanitarian law related to Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territories.

In October 2020, LRWC wrote a letter raising concerns about possible violation of international human rights law and standards including the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, and the UN *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers*, all of which affirm freedom of expression. LRWC called for an independent investigation.

A review by former Supreme Court of Canada Justice Thomas Cromwell found in December 2020 that the “inference that external influence played any role in the decision to discontinue the recruitment of the Preferred Candidate... is not justified.”

... continued

## Canada, U of T hiring process, continued

Justice Cromwell’s report was criticized by a number of human rights scholars and practitioners. In April 2021, the Council of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) censured the U of T after its own investigation concluded that “the decision to cancel Dr. Valentina Azarova’s hiring was politically motivated, and as such constitutes a serious breach of widely recognized principles of academic freedom.” CAUT’s censure called on academics not to accept appointments or speaking engagements at the institution until satisfactory changes are made.

Multiple complaints in 2020 to the Canadian Judicial Council (CJC) about Judge Spiro’s actions resulted in a 21 May 2021 Review Panel decision that Judge Spiro had made “a serious error” but that the mistakes “were not serious enough to warrant a recommendation for his removal from office.” An application has been filed to the Federal Court seeking judicial review of the CJC’s decision to close the complaint regarding Judge Spiro. LRWC is continuing to monitor this situation

## CHINA

### Lawyers Chang Weiping and Ding Jiaxi receive human rights awards

Human rights lawyers, defenders, and dissidents continue to be severely persecuted by China, including Mr. Chang Weiping, whose licence to practice law was suspended in January 2020 as a result of his human rights work. Since October 2020 Chang Weiping has been arbitrarily detained in an unknown location in violation of China’s domestic and international law obligations. Mr. Ding Jiaxi, another unjustly disbarred lawyer persecuted for his human rights work, has been detained since 26 December 2019 on charges of subverting state power. He has reportedly been subjected to torture.



Chang Weiping (L) and Ding Jiaxi (R)

On 9 July 2021, Chang Weiping and Ding Jiaxi received the China Human Rights Lawyer Award at the 5th Annual China Human Rights Day conference (see page 6)

## LRWC joins call for global ban on biometric recognition technologies for mass surveillance



On 7 June 2021, LRWC joined an open letter with 179 signatories from 55 countries calling for a global ban on the uses of facial biometric recognition technologies that have enabled human rights abuses in many countries, including China, where advanced facial recognition technology is being used for racial profiling to track and control Uyghur people, in Xinjiang province and other parts of the country. China has arbitrarily detained millions of Uyghur people without access to lawyers or legal remedies.

The letter called on international organizations, such as the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, private entities, technology workers and their unions, investors and financial institutions, as well as donor organizations to take specific steps to condemn, halt, or prevent the development, sale and use of facial recognition remote biometric recognition technologies that enable mass surveillance and discriminatory targeted surveillance.

### China: Statement to UN Human Rights Council calling for prevention of genocide

On 28 June 2021, LRWC made an oral video statement to the UN Human Rights Council at its dialogue with the UN Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide calling attention to alleged atrocity crimes in China. Referencing the UN framework for analysis of risk factors for genocide, LRWC's statement pointed to the necessity that States ensure an independent judiciary, a legal profession free to advocate clients' rights without harassment, and a strong civil society. The statement noted that China's years of suppression of the truth about its rights violations, its thwarting of access to remedies, and violations against lawyers, defenders, and journalists, has facilitated its persecution of ethnic and religious minorities.

LRWC's statement cited scholars and several States that have alleged that China is committing genocide against Uyghur people. LRWC urged the Council to prevent genocide by taking measures to halt China's human rights violations and atrocity crimes.

## The 5th China Human Rights Lawyers Day

LRWC participated in the 5th China Human Rights Lawyers Day online conference held on 7 July 2021 (2021.7.09), the 6th anniversary of China's "709 Crackdown" against human rights lawyers launched by authorities in 2015.



The conference featured presentations from State officials, NGO leaders, Chinese lawyers, and family members of human rights lawyers and defenders who have been arbitrarily detained, tortured, ill-treated, or disappeared.

LRWC was among human rights organizations around the world participating in the half-day conference organized by several human rights organizations including the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, Humanitarian China (US), China Aid (US), China Change (US), the Judicial Reform Foundation (Taiwan), and the China Human Rights Lawyers Foundation. One of LRWC's China monitors, Clive Ansley, contributed a video message in English and Mandarin expressing solidarity with China's human rights lawyers and calling for their protection (see [video at 2:40:55](#)).

Featured during the conference was a 13-minute video, "The Persecution List," which lists the names of many of the lawyers persecuted by authorities in China.



## COLOMBIA

### **Breaking news: Day of the Endangered Lawyer 2022 to focus on Colombia**

On 15 June 2021 the coalition of the Day of the Endangered Lawyer agreed that Colombia will be the focus of the 12th Day of the Endangered Lawyer (DOEL) to be held on 24 January 2022. The international coalition is currently developing a report of the dire situation of human rights lawyers in Colombia to be launched in January 2022. The coalition is comprised of lawyers' organizations around the world who together plan events around the world to focus attention on lawyers at risk. This is the second time the DOEL has focused on Colombia. In 2014, the DOEL issued a [basic paper](#) on the situation of Colombian lawyers at that time. The current situation of Colombian human rights defenders is [dire](#), and the practice of law is [perilous](#).

## IRAN

### **Lawyer Amirsalar Davoudi released on bail**

On 13 June 2021, LRWC [welcomed news](#) that human rights lawyer Amirsalar Davoudi (sometimes transliterated as Davoodi) was granted pre-trial release from prison in Iran on bail of 20 billion IRR (approximately US \$475,000). His work includes representation of many detained human rights defenders and political prisoners.

He was first arrested on 20 November 2018 by security agents in his law office and learned on 28 May 2019 that he had been sentenced to a total of 30 years' imprisonment and 111 lashes on six charges including "insulting the Supreme Leader," "spreading propaganda against the system" and "forming a group with the purpose of disrupting national security." The charges related to his social media posts and media interviews. According to a report by Front Line Defenders, Mr. Davoudi was scheduled for retrial by Tehran's Revolutionary Court starting 20 June 2021.

The news of his pre-trial release is welcome after a joint statement to the [Human Rights Council](#) was made in March 2021 by several NGOs, including LRWC, seeking his immediate and unconditional release.

### **Iran: Human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh remains imprisoned**



Ms. Nasrin Sotoudeh and other lawyers remain in prison in Iran after being convicted on illegitimate charges in unfair trials. On 6 July, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders, along with several other UN Special Procedures mandate holders, issued a press release calling on Iran to release all those detained for their human rights work. See LRWC's [advocacy on Iran](#).

## MALAYSIA

### **Malaysia: Plaintiff withdraws SLAPP against human rights lawyer Charles Hector**



On 14 April 2021, LRWC welcomed news that two corporations withdrew contempt of court charges filed against Malaysian human rights lawyer Charles Hector and eight environmental rights defenders represented by Mr. Hector. Two logging contractors, Beijing Million SDN BHD and Rosah Timber Trading SDN BHD, had brought an application to begin contempt of court proceedings against Mr. Hector and his clients. In November 2020 the logging corporations had obtained an ex parte interlocutory injunction to prevent the defendants from accessing a contested 202.61-hectare area in the Forest Reserve. The defendants' lawyer, Charles Hector, has been preparing for a full trial of the injunction application.

On 24 March 2021, LRWC wrote a letter to authorities in Malaysia expressing concern that the contempt proceedings appeared to be a spurious attempt by the corporations to obstruct the court's determination of the defendants' rights, including their right to legal representation by Mr. Hector. LRWC was among dozens of human rights organizations advocating in this matter.



## MYANMAR

### LRWC nominee U Khin Maung Zaw shortlisted for 2021 Lawyers for Lawyers Prize

In April 2021, LRWC nominated U Khin Maung Zaw for the 2021 prize of Lawyers for Lawyers (L4L). Based in the Netherlands, L4L advocates for lawyers at risk around the world.

On 4 June, LRWC was notified that U Khin Maung Zaw had been shortlisted by the independent the selection committee for the prize.



U Khin Maung Zaw has a lengthy track record of upholding the independence of the legal profession and equal access to justice. From 2017 to 2019, he represented two Myanmar journalists who were falsely charged with criminal offences for investigating military involvement in the In Dinn massacre of Rohingya Muslim men and boys. Rohingya people have been subjected to extreme forms of discrimination for decades, including crimes against humanity, and alleged genocide since 2017.

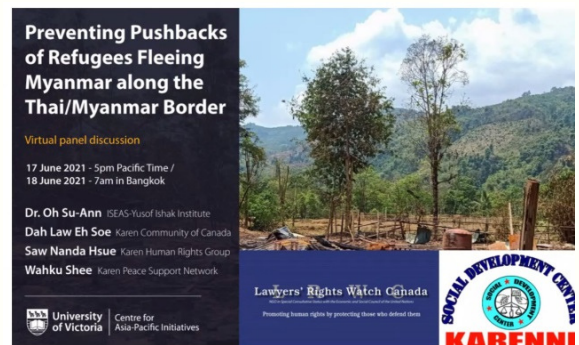
In 2019, U Khin Maung Zaw and his colleague Daw Su Darli Aung took considerable personal and professional risks during their representation of a falsely-accused defendant in a high-profile child sexual assault case that took place in a school with ties to members of the Myanmar military. U Khin Maung Zaw and Daw Su Darli Aung faced fabricated charges while persistently defending their client. They successfully demonstrated that the police had abused their powers by arresting the innocent defendant to cover up the true perpetrators of the assault.

... continued

### Myanmar, U Khin Maung Zaw, continued...

Since the military coup in Myanmar on 1 February 2021, U Khin Maung Zaw and other human rights lawyers have been at grave risk, and many have gone into hiding. Others, such as U Khin Maung, who continue to represent arbitrarily detained persons, must regularly move from safe-house to safe-house. U Khin Maung Zaw and his colleagues have received threats connected with their representation of persons arbitrarily detained by the Myanmar military including elected government leaders deposed in the coup and a number of journalists.

### LRWC supports refugees from Myanmar on World Refugee Day



To commemorate World Refugee Day 2021, LRWC director Renée Mulligan was among the organizers of an online panel discussion on 17 June 2021 entitled “Preventing Pushbacks of Refugees Fleeing Myanmar Along the Thai/Myanmar Border.” The event was hosted by the Centre for Asia Pacific Initiatives at the University of Victoria.

Panelists discussed the situation of ethnic minority groups in Myanmar after the military coup on 1 February 2021. In addition to responding with extreme violence against demonstrations across the country, the junta has targeted many of the ethnic minority states bordering Thailand with airstrikes and other violence.

LRWC is among the human rights defenders, civil society organizations, and academics in Myanmar, Thailand, Singapore and Canada, working to increase awareness of the extreme human rights abuses and danger facing Karen, Karenni and other ethnic minority populations within Myanmar.

At least 230,000 people, including pro-democracy and human rights activists, have been displaced in Myanmar since the coup, including at least 100,000 Karenni people (at least a quarter of the population of Kayah state) and 177,000 people from Karen state.



## Myanmar: Statement to UN Human Rights Council on prevention of genocide

On 28 June 2021, LRWC made an [oral video statement](#) at the UN Human Rights Council about the disturbing lack of international political will to prevent genocide and calling for concrete international measures to halt atrocities in Myanmar. The statement pointed out that prevention of genocide “requires States to ensure an independent judiciary, a legal profession free to advocate clients’ rights without harassment, and a strong civil society.”

For decades, Myanmar authorities have persecuted lawyers, defenders, and journalists, and have fostered discrimination and hatred against Rohingya people. NGOs and UN Special Procedures warned of escalating violations for years prior to the 2017 atrocities. Genocide is reportedly ongoing in Myanmar. “There has been no lack of warning,” noted the statement. Rather what is missing is international action to apply targeted economic sanctions, arms embargos, and other concrete measures to halt the atrocities.

## Myanmar: Continued arbitrary detention of lawyers and defenders

LRWC made an oral video [statement](#) to the UN Human Rights Council on 7 July 2021 deploring the Myanmar military junta’s “continuing assault on the rule of law,” pointing out that the junta “has extrajudicially killed hundreds of civilians and arbitrarily detained more than 5,000, including numerous lawyers, journalists, defenders, peaceful protesters, politicians, dissidents, and even children.”

Co-sponsored by the Law Society of England and Wales, the statement urged “all Council members and observer States, including China, Russia, and ASEAN [Association of South East Asian Nations] States, to take immediate action to call for release of all arbitrarily detained persons and to “urge the UN Security Council to apply a global arms embargo and other measures to prevent the junta from continuing its grave, systematic, and widespread violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.”



## PHILIPPINES

### Philippines: Halt extrajudicial killings and attacks on human rights defenders



LRWC was among 103 signatories of a [joint letter](#) of 7 June 2021 to the Supreme Court of the Philippines and the Philippine Department of Justice, which expressed urgent concern about “extrajudicial killings, judicial harassment, arbitrary arrests and detention and threats through red-tagging against human rights defenders” in the Philippines. Led by a leading human rights organization in the Philippines, Karapatan, the letter called for a number of actions including stopping the killings; ensuring prompt, thorough, independent and impartial investigations and holding perpetrators accountable; and taking measures to protecting human rights defenders.

### Continued extrajudicial killing of lawyers in the Philippines



LRWC was joined by the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, the International Commission of Jurists, the International Bar Association’s Institute for Human Rights, Lawyer for Lawyers, and the Association of American Jurists in a statement on 28 June 2021 led by the National Union of People’s Lawyers in the Philippines, to the UN Human Rights Council.

The statement emphasized the ongoing plight of lawyers in the Philippines, where dozens of lawyers have been murdered. The statement underscored comments in the annual report of the Special Rapporteur on Independence of Judges and Lawyers that most attacks are apparently perpetrated by the President’s counter-insurgency task force or by national or State security. Despite Council Resolutions in 2019 and 2020, Philippines lawyers and their associations continue to face violence and vilification. The statement recommended a Human Rights Council investigation into extrajudicial killings in the Philippines since 2016.

## RUSSIA

### Russia: Judicial harassment of lawyer Ivan Pavlov

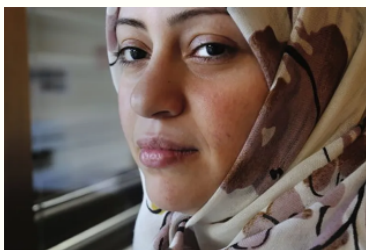


On 6 May 2021, LRWC joined Lawyers for Lawyers in a statement seeking release of Russian human rights lawyer Ivan Pavlov and an end to judicial harassment against him. Mr. Pavlov represents Ivan Safronov and Aleksei Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation in a case launched by prosecutors to designate the Foundation as an "extremist" group. Mr. Pavlov represents those wrongly accused by Russian security services of disclosing state secrets, treason or espionage. The arrest of Mr. Pavlov occurred the day after he challenged the secrecy of the evidence in the Navalny case.

## SAUDI ARABIA

### Samar Badawi released after nearly 3 years

LRWC welcomes news on 27 June 2021 that women's rights defender Samar Badawi has been released from prison in Saudi Arabia after being arbitrarily detained for nearly three years.



Ms. Badawi was released following the expiry of her sentence. Since 2016, LRWC has conducted advocacy for her release, including a petition to the UN Special Procedures in September 2019 and nomination of Ms. Badawi for the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award in February 2020. LRWC continues to monitor the situation of human rights defenders in Saudi Arabia, including blogger Raif Badawi (brother of Samar Badawi) and lawyer Waleed Abulkhair, who remain unjustly imprisoned.

## THAILAND

### Thailand Supreme Court dismisses defamation SLAPP lawsuit against Andy Hall



On 10 May 2021, LRWC welcomed the decision of Thailand's Supreme Court to dismiss the last remaining criminal defamation charge against UK human rights defender Andy Hall in a series of cases of Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation (SLAPP) by the Natural Fruit corporation in Thailand since 2013.

LRWC has participated in advocacy for Mr. Hall in the Natural Fruit Co. Ltd. including letters or statements in June 2014, August 2014, September 2014, July 2015, and a joint amicus brief in 2015 to a Thai court (with the International Commission of Jurists). LRWC has also intervened in joint advocacy seeking an end to judicial harassment against Mr. Hall and other defenders by Thailand poultry company, Thammakaset Co. Ltd. LRWC continues to advocate for decriminalization of Thailand's laws on defamation and for increased protection for human rights defenders in Thailand.

### Proposed Thailand NGO law threatens civil society organizations

On 31 May 2021, LRWC issued a statement urging Thailand to withdraw a draft Act on the Operation of Not-for-Profit Organizations (draft NGO law) and conduct full and meaningful consultations with civil society to ensure that all NGO laws comply with international human rights law and standards.

If enacted, the draft NGO law would pose serious threats to the functioning of Thai civil society organizations and have a damaging impact on international non-governmental organizations working to address human rights in Thailand.

In a follow up intervention on 17 June 2021, LRWC joined 41 Thai and international human rights and labour rights in a letter to the US Secretary of State calling on the US, including its Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP), to advocate that the Thai government withdraw the draft Act.

## US downgrades Thailand in 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report

In June 2021, the US downgraded Thailand to the “Tier 2 Watch List” in its 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP Report). The Thailand Seafood Working Group, of which LRWC is a member, made a submission to the TIP office on 31 March 2021. The US TIP report found that during the reporting period the Thailand government failed to demonstrate sufficient efforts to address the violations of migrant workers’ rights, noting that “Thailand’s criminal defamation laws continued to allow companies to pursue criminal charges against potential victims and advocates, including through strategic lawsuits against public participation [SLAPPs], which resulted in advocates facing years of legal harassment.”

## TURKEY

### LRWC interventions on Turkey at UN Human Rights Council

Turkey was included in two LRWC joint statements at the 47th session of the UN Human Rights Council. On 28 April 2021, LRWC joined a statement led by the International Bar Association’s Human Rights Institute expressing alarm that the COVID-19 pandemic has been used by “some governments to enact measures that limit fundamental rights and freedoms, without regard for the principles of legality, necessity and proportionality,” including in Turkey where selectively-used legislation has been used to intimidate dissenting voices and to approve “systematic human rights violations by state agents.”

Also on 28 June, LRWC made an oral video statement expressing concern about the hundreds of lawyers “arbitrarily detained on spurious charges under overbroad terrorism laws” and about human rights defenders excluded from COVID-19 prisoner releases putting their health at risk.

LRWC’s Turkey monitor regularly writes letters and statements raising concerns about Turkey’s persecution of human rights lawyers.

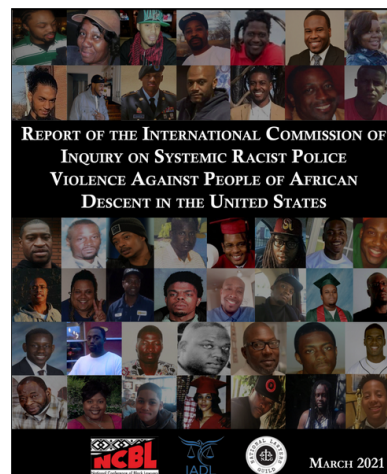
## UNITED STATES

### US withdraws sanctions against International Criminal Court

On 2 April 2021, the United States (US) revoked its September 2020 sanctions against personnel of the International Criminal Court (ICC). See more about LRWC’s interventions in the section on the ICC.

### LRWC’s Annual General Meeting on 7 May 2021 featured keynote speaker Marjorie Cohn

LRWC’s Annual General Meeting held 7 May 2021 featured a keynote speech by Professor Marjorie Cohn who discussed the work of the NGO-led International Commission of Inquiry on systemic racist police violence against people of African descent in the US. Released on 27 April 2021, the Commission of Inquiry’s 188-page report was submitted to the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights and the UN Human Rights Council. The report concluded that actions by the police and other State agents in the US “to unlawfully detain and/or extrajudicially kill people of African descent” demonstrate a prima facie case of crimes against humanity.



At LRWC’s AGM, Professor Cohn outlined the Commission’s report, including applicable international human rights law. Marjorie Cohn is a Professor Emerita at Thomas Jefferson School of Law where she taught from 1991-2016. She is a former president of the National Lawyers Guild in the US and is a board member of LRWC. She served as a rapporteur for the International Commission of Inquiry.

On 1 June 2021, the High Commissioner released her report and an accompanying conference paper which cite the US Commission of Inquiry report.



## USA: Coalition calls for UN Inquiry into racist US police violence

On 10 May 2021, a coalition of hundreds of families of victims of United States (US) police violence and civil society organizations from all over the world, including LRWC, signed a [letter](#) to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights regarding implementation of the June 2020 resolution A/HRC/43/1 by the UN Human Rights Council. The civil society campaign for the 2020 resolution and its implementation has been led by the American Civil Liberties Association ([ACLU](#)).

The ACLU-led letter points out that police in the US “kill nearly 1,000 people every year. The epidemic of police violence has been directly and disproportionately targeted at people of color. Indigenous People and people of African descent experience the highest rates of fatal police shootings...” In 2020, LRWC had joined [several letters and statements to the UN Human Rights Council](#) in the ACLU-led campaign seeking an end to systemic racism and police violence against people of African descent in the US and around the world.

## UN Human Rights Council creates independent expert mechanism on police violence against people of African descent

On 13 July 2021, LRWC welcomed a consensus [resolution](#) of the UN Human Rights Council to create an independent expert mechanism “to further the agenda towards transformative change for racial justice and equality in the context of law enforcement globally, especially where relating to the legacies of colonialism and the Transatlantic slave trade in enslaved Africans, and to contribute to accountability and redress for victims...”

While the resolution has a global focus, the resolution mentions the murder of George Floyd in the US on 25 May 2020, which, the resolution states, “drew attention to the scourge of systemic and structural racism and galvanized efforts to address this global problem in the United States and around the world...”

The resolution also acknowledges that “slavery and the slave trade, including the transatlantic slave trade” are “among the major sources and manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and that Africans and people of African descent, Asians and people of Asian descent and indigenous peoples were victims of these acts and continue to be victims of their consequences.”

## VIET NAM

### Viet Nam: Release human rights defender Nguyen Thuy Hanh



In a [letter](#) dated 8 July 2021, LRWC called for the immediate release of human rights defender Nguyen Thuy Hanh, and for the Vietnamese authorities to end their harassment of human rights defenders, journalists, and political activists. The letter urged the government of Vietnam to guarantee the well-being of Nguyen Thuy Hanh and to provide her with immediate access to lawyers of her choice and to communications and visits with family members and friends.



Click on the image to learn more about how to join LRWC or donate to protect human rights advocates at risk.

## UNITED NATIONS

### QUADRENNIAL REPORT TO THE UN

#### LRWC submits 4th quadrennial report to the UN Economic and Social Council

Every four years, NGOs in consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) are required to submit a report of their activities. LRWC was granted consultative status in 2005 and submitted its 4th quadriennial report on 25 May 2021.

The report noted, among other things, that since the last quadrennial report submitted in 2017, LRWC has participated in all sessions of the Human Rights Council with a total of “62 individual or joint oral statements on situations in more than 21 countries on topics such as independence of judges and lawyers, access to remedies or accountability for human rights violations, and on prevention and remediation of attacks against human rights defenders.” LRWC also provided several written submissions to the Council including Special Procedures and UN Treaty Bodies.

### UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

#### Oral video statements at the 47th session of the UN Human Rights Council (21 June to 14 July 2021)

- **Situation of human rights in China, especially in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.** Oral video statement by ISHR, joined by a number of other NGOs including LRWC, 21 June 2021.
- **Myanmar and China: Duty to prevent genocide,** Oral video statement by LRWC, 28 June 2021.
- **Philippines, Turkey, Iran: Ongoing plight of lawyers.** Oral video statement by LRWC, joined by International Association of Democratic Lawyers, International Commission of Jurists, International Bar Association's Institute for Human Rights, Lawyer for Lawyers, and Association of American Jurists, and endorsed by National Union of People's Lawyers in the Philippines, 28 June 2021.

#### UN Human Rights Council statements, continued

- **COVID-19 pandemic used to justify interference with lawyers,** Joint oral video statement by the International Bar Association's Human Rights institute, joined by Lawyers for Lawyers, the National Union of Peoples' Lawyers, and Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada, 28 June 2021.
- **Belarus: Increased harassment of lawyers in 2021,** Joint oral video statement to the UN Human Rights Council by Lawyers for Lawyers, joined by LRWC, 5 July 2021.
- **Myanmar: Continued arbitrary detention of lawyers and defenders,** Joint oral video statement by LRWC, joined by the Law Society of England and Wales, 7 July 2021.

#### NGO Side event: Hong Kong: Assessing the National Security Law in Hong Kong, 1 July 2021

A side event on the situation of Hong Kong was held during the 47th Session of the UN Human Rights Council. The event was organized by the International Service for Human Rights. LRWC was among the co-sponsors.

The side event featured presentations by human rights defenders Mr. Nathan Law, Ms. Glacier Kwong, and Dr. Victoria Hui, University of Notre Dame, as well as several UN Special Procedures mandate holders: Mr. Clement Voule, UN Special Rapporteur on Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association; Ms. Mary Lawlor, UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders; and Ms. Irene Khan, UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression.

## INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

### USA revokes sanctions against International Criminal Court prosecutor



**Fatou Bensouda,**  
**ICC Chief Prosecutor until June 2021**

On 7 April 2021, LRWC welcomed the US government's revocation of sanctions against personnel of the International Criminal Court (ICC) on 2 April 2021. The previous administration of Donald J. Trump had imposed sanctions on the ICC Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda and Phakiso Mochochoko, the Head of the Jurisdiction, Complementarity and Cooperation Division of the Office of the Prosecutor.

On 29 March 2021, LRWC had issued a statement advocating an immediate end to the sanctions, because they constituted “a direct attack on the judicial independence of the ICC, undermine[d] access to justice for victims of atrocity crimes, and contribute[d] to impunity for the perpetrators.” LRWC’s statement was sent to US President Joe Biden and US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken. The US Department of State has also terminated its 2019 policy to restrict visa for other ICC officials involved in investigating the actions of US troops in Afghanistan and other countries. Fatou Bensouda ended her term as Chief Prosecutor of the ICC in June 2021. She has been succeeded by lawyer Karim Khan QC, who will begin his mandate free of the threat of US sanctions.

LRWC had repeatedly urged the US to end its threats against the ICC, and continues to urge the US to ensure future respect for the independence of the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC and to establish a cooperative relationship with the ICC and its personnel that respects the international rule of law and the duty of all States to uphold its international obligations to prosecute international crimes.

***NOTE:** This article was first published in the Spring 2021 edition of ACTION NEWS as it was breaking news at the time of publication. We reproduce it in this edition, as the events occurred during the April-June 2021 reporting period.*

## LRWC EDUCATIONAL EVENTS

- **International Commission of Inquiry on Systemic Racist Police Violence Against People of African Descent in the United States**, Professor Marjorie Cohn, LRWC Annual General Meeting, 7 May 2021 (for details, see section on the United States above)
- **Preventing Pushbacks of Refugees Fleeing Myanmar Along the Thai/Myanmar Border**, Panel discussion organized by LRWC director Renée Mulligan, 17 June 2021 (for details, see section on Myanmar above).

## AWARDS

- **LRWC nominated Myanmar lawyer U Khin Maung Zaw for the 2021 Lawyers for Lawyers Prize**, April 2021 (see more under Myanmar above).

## LRWC IN THE NEWS

- Bernise Carolino, “Privacy commissioners issue draft guidance on police use of facial recognition technology,” *Canadian Lawyer*, 15 June 2021.



## PUBLICATIONS

The following articles were written by LRWC directors and volunteers and published between 1 April and 30 June 2021.

- Marjorie Cohn, "Commission Finds Anti-Black Police Violence Constitutes Crimes Against Humanity," *Truthout*, 28 April 2021.
- Catherine Morris. "USA vs. the International Criminal Court: A Fraught History in the Quest for International Accountability for Atrocity Crimes." *Slaw.ca*, 19 May 2021.
- Catherine Morris, "Manipulating the 'Rule of Law': How Powerful Actors Undermine Accountability for Atrocity Crimes in Myanmar." *The Advocate* 79(3) May 2021: 389-96.
- Marjorie Cohn, UN Report Calls for Reparations for Victims of Systemic Racist Police Violence, *Truthout*, 1 July 2021.

## WORKING PRO BONO WITH LRWC

LRWC acknowledges with gratitude the ongoing dedication of volunteers, donors, and part time staff who faithfully work to uphold international human rights law and standards. During the second quarter of 2021, dozens of LRWC members worked pro bono conducting research, education and advocacy for LRWC events, reports, publications, letters, and statements. Human rights organizations increasingly face the need to ensure their security. LRWC's privacy and security measures have been enhanced, and this means the names of volunteers and donors are not listed here with the exception of LRWC Executive Director and those named in publications or public events.

## WORKING IN COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Through joint advocacy between April and June 2021, LRWC worked in cooperation with hundreds of other organizations around the world.

## JOIN LRWC

LRWC needs your regular donations to carry on and expand its work. Monthly donations increase LRWC's ability to respond quickly and plan ahead.

Fees and donations can be made by cheque or [Canada Helps](#).

Follow LRWC on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn  
Amplify LRWC's advocacy by sharing our social media posts.



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