

Organization: Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada
Item: Item 10: General Debate
Date: 6 October 2021
Speaker: Catherine Morris

Oral Statement to the 48th Session of the UN Human Rights Council from Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC) and International Commission of Jurists, NGOs in special consultative status.

Madame President,

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada and the International Commission of Jurists welcome the Special Rapporteur's report.¹ We agree that long-term "regression of... democratic space and civil and political rights and freedoms, interlinked with... monopolization of power" is the key issue.²

Over decades, the same ruling authorities have steadily consolidated their political and economic influence. This "vortex of power"³ deprives Cambodians of their right to political participation, which, in turn, is essential to ensure the exercise of their economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights.

Concentration of executive power has given rise to the adoption by a one-party parliament of vague and overbroad laws and decrees, routinely deployed for judicial or administrative harassment of dissenters — human rights defenders, civil society organizations, independent media, and opposition politicians. Power accumulation is at the root of Cambodia's failure to ensure the independence and integrity of judges and lawyers, and equal access to effective legal representation and remedies.

The continued need for a strong mandate is clear. We urge the Council to ensure that the resolution provides not only for annual reports by the Special Rapporteur but also for oral updates at the 49th and 52nd sessions. We join the Special Rapporteur in urging that the international community strengthen programmes to implement human rights, and promote transparent fairness in the upcoming commune and national elections.

Thank you.

References

¹ Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in Cambodia: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia, 3 August 2021, available at: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/48/79>.

² *Ibid*, para 14.

³ *Ibid*, para. 30.