

Organization: Lawyers for Lawyers
Item 10: Enhanced interactive dialogue on Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the International Team of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo
Date: 4 October 2022
Speaker: Marije Pricker

Oral Statement to the 51st Session of the UN Human Rights Council from Lawyers for Lawyers, Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC) and the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, NGOs in special consultative status

Lawyers for Lawyers, the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute and Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada welcome the report of the High Commissioner. We share the concerns about the attacks on human rights defenders, including lawyers.¹

The adequate protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms requires that everyone has effective access to justice and legal assistance. To guarantee this, it is of paramount importance that a judicial system is in place in which lawyers are able to carry out their professional activities independently and without undue interference.

Lawyers in the DRC who work on politically sensitive cases are frequently subjected to threats, intimidation, improper interference and even physical attacks by members of law enforcement agencies or the military. Lawyers in the DRC have also been subjected to judicial harassment, arrest, detention and prosecution in connection to their professional duties.

Lawyers may face administrative sanctions on the grounds of 'discourteousness' which is neither written nor specified in the DRC's 1979 law on the organization of the bar². This may lead to the arbitrary disbarment of lawyers.

We urge the DRC to take immediate measures to safeguard the independence of lawyers and to provide protection against any form of undue interference with their work.

Thank you.

This statement was delivered by:
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¹ Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Human rights situation and the activities of the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo ([A/HRC/51/61](#)).

² Ordonnance-LOI 790928 u 28 septembre 1979 portant organisation du barreau, du corps des défenseurs judiciaires et du corps des mandataires de l'État