

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

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

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10 May 2025

The Honourable David Eby
Premier of British Columbia
PO Box 9041 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1
Email: premier@gov.bc.ca

Dear Premier,

Re: Ensure respect for independence of the judiciary and fair trials

We are writing on behalf of Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada, a committee of lawyers and other human rights defenders who promote international human rights law and the rule of law through advocacy, legal research and education. LRWC is a volunteer-run NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

LRWC has been deeply shocked and disturbed by the horrifying incident in which a person drove into a crowd of persons celebrating the Lapu Lapu Day festival in Vancouver on 26 April 2025, resulting in the deaths of 11 people and injuries to many others. We express our support and solidarity with all those affected by this terrible incident, including all the victims and their family members, as well as witnesses and members of the Filipino community who have lost members of their community. We fully support the efforts for a prompt and thorough investigation of this appalling incident to ensure that all those responsible are brought to justice in a fair trial before an impartial court. We understand that a person has been arrested and charged with a number of counts of murder, and that he is undergoing a court-ordered psychiatric assessment to determine if he is fit to stand trial.

LRWC is deeply concerned by comments you made during question period on 1 May 2025, in which you reportedly drew a conclusion as to the accused person's guilt and expressed your opinion as to your preferred outcome of the trial and sentence.¹ We consider such comments to be a serious overreach of your role as an elected official and Premier of the Province of British Columbia. It is the role of impartial judges to make determinations on criminal charges after hearing and carefully weighing all evidence.

¹ "Lawyers' group 'deeply concerned' by Eby's comments on Vancouver attack suspect," CTV, 7 May 2025, available <https://www.ctvnews.ca/vancouver/article/lawyers-group-deeply-concerned-by-ebys-comments-on-vancouver-attack-suspect/>

It is entirely inappropriate for elected members of parliament to render opinions on matters that are before the courts. Executive interventions into court proceedings can bring the administration of justice into disrepute and have a chilling effect on the work of the lawyers and judges. Your comments also potentially create doubts about the effectiveness of the judiciary to ensure a just and impartial outcome. While we appreciate your subsequent clarification of confidence in the independence of the judiciary in this matter, we remain deeply concerned about the impact of your comments on the accused person's right to a fair and impartial trial.

We respectfully request that you ensure that you and all members of the Legislative Assembly refrain from rendering public opinions on matters that are before the courts.

We would be pleased to discuss this matter further, and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

[signature]

Joey Doyle
Co-Chair
Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

[signature]

Heather Neun
Co-Chair
Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

cc. The Honourable Niki Sharma
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