

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

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

Activities at the UN Human Rights Council's 59th Session 16 June to 11 July 2025

Report to the Board of LRWC, July 2025

LRWC participated actively in the UN Human Rights Council's 59th session, 16 June to 11 July 2025. LRWC led the drafting of three oral video statements. LRWC also joined other NGOs in four additional joint oral statements. LRWC worked with the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI), the Law Society of England and Wales (LSEW), and Lawyers for Lawyers (L4L), NGOs with ECOSOC consultative status, on joint statements. The number of statements was limited in part due to the fact that no general debates were held during the June-July session, limiting NGO participation. LRWC also joined a pre-session advocacy letter led by Defend Defenders, and co-sponsored a side event led by the International Commission of Jurists and the IBAHRI.

Summary of oral video statements and side event

Oral video statements (date order)

- **18 Jun 2025: USA crackdowns against peaceful assembly**

On 18 June, LRWC delivered a statement expressing concern about the US governments' concerted attack on the rule of law, threatening human rights defenders, lawyers, judges, and civil society groups that uphold human rights. The statement was joined by the IBAHRI and the ISHR. See the statement [text](#) UN website and on the [LRWC website](#). See the [video on UN WebTV](#) at 14:18.

- **25 June 2025: China: Ten years since the "709 crackdown" against lawyers**

To mark the tenth anniversary of China's July 9th 2015 crackdown ("709 crackdown") on legal professionals, LRWC delivered a joint statement on 25 June 2025 calling for accountability for China for its ongoing repression of human rights lawyers. The statement was joined by ISHR, Lawyers for Lawyers, IBAHRI and the Law Society of England and Wales, and endorsed by a number of other NGOs without consultative status, namely Alliance for Citizens Rights, Asian Lawyers Network (ALN), China Aid, CIVICUS (note that CIVICUS has ECOSOC status but did not formally cosponsor), Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong Foundation, Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE), Hong Kong Democracy Council, Human Rights Foundation, Human Rights in China, Humanitarian China, Judicial Reform Foundation, Safeguard Defenders, Taipei Bar Association, Human Rights Committee, The Rights Practice, Uyghur Human Rights Project, and World Uyghur Congress. LRWC worked closely with ISHR on the development, drafting, and co-sponsorship of this statement. The statement noted the 12-year prison sentence being served by lawyer Ding Jiaxi for attending a private gathering with other lawyers. Also noted

was the enforced disappearance of lawyer Gao Zhisheng, missing since August 2017, as well as ongoing persecution of human rights advocates, including Tibetans, Uyghurs, and Hong Kongers, and transnational repression of dissenters. See the statement on the [LRWC website](#). See the video at [UN WebTV](#) at 1:50:30.

- **26 June 2025: Belarus: Repression of civil society, including reprisals against lawyers and lack of independence of judiciary and legal profession**

LRWC joined the IBAHRI and the International Commission of Jurists in a statement condemning the “ongoing repression of civil society in Belarus, in particular the systematic reprisals against lawyers representing political opposition figures or acting in defence of human rights or the rule of law, the subordination of the judiciary to executive control, and the erosion of institutional independence of the legal profession in Belarus. See the [text](#) of the statement at on the UN website.

- **27 June 2025: Myanmar: Escalating human rights violations and atrocity crimes**

LRWC made a statement deploring ongoing impunity of Myanmar’s military for creating laws that violate international law, implemented by courts subsumed by the junta. The statement noted that over “22,000 are unlawfully detained without access to independent courts or adequate legal representation. Torture, ill-treatment and extra-judicial killings are routine, along with arrests of at least 53 lawyers since the 2021 coup. See the text of the statement on the [UN website](#) and on the [LRWC website](#). See the [video on UN WebTV](#): the debate starts at 48:27. LRWC’s statement starts at 2:28:19

- **27 June 2025: Myanmar: Arbitrary detention and unfair trials**

LRWC joined a statement by IBAHRI, the Law Council of Australia and the International Commission of Jurists condemning the ongoing systematic atrocity crimes that have been carried out chronically in Myanmar since the 2021 military coup, including systematic and widespread arbitrary arrests and detention and unfair trials of perceived opponents of the military regime along with torture and ill-treatment of detainees, including sexual violence, forced labour, and denial of medical care to extract “confessions.” See the text of the statement on the [UN website](#). See the video on [UN WebTV](#). The debate starts at 48:27. The IBAHRI joint statement is at 2:26:44.

- **30 June 2025: Lawyers and climate change**

LRWC joined a statement by Lawyers for Lawyers and the IBAHRI which addresses the topic of escalating reprisals and criminalisation of environmental human rights defenders, including environmental lawyers who, according to a [recent L4L report](#), face widespread interference with their work ranging from physical attacks and arbitrary prosecutions to surveillance and stigmatisation. See the text of the statement on the [UN Website](#).

- **3 July 2025: Russia/Ukraine: Persecution of lawyers in occupied Crimea**

LRWC joined Lawyers for Lawyers, the IBAHRI, Front Line Defenders, and the Council of Bars and Law Societies in Europe in a statement registering deep concern about the ongoing systematic harassment, threats, prosecution and obstruction of lawyers in occupied Crimea who represent Crimean Tatars, Ukrainians, and civil society actors in politically sensitive cases. Bar associations under the occupying authorities no longer function independently, and disciplinary bodies are weaponized to disbar lawyers or interfere with their work. See the full text of the statement on the [UN Website](#). See the video on [UN WebTV](#): at 2:29:34

Pre-session joint letter

- **Eritrea: Pre-session joint letter urging the Council to adopt a resolution to renew mandate for the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea.**

LRWC joined a letter to Human Rights Council member States, sponsored by Defend Defenders, seeking support for a resolution renewing the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on human rights in Eritrea. Eritrea's ongoing widespread violations include arbitrary detentions, violations of the right to a fair trial and access to justice, "total closure of civic space" (which affects human rights defenders and journalists), transnational repression of dissidents located abroad, and allegations of crimes against humanity. See the letter dated 2 May 2025 on the [DefendDefenders' website](#) (English and French).

Side event

- **27 June 2025: Attacks against the International Criminal Court and independent judiciaries globally**

LRWC was among the cosponsors of a side event on attacks against the International Criminal Court and independent judiciaries around the world. The side event was organized by the International Commission of Jurists and co-sponsored by Amnesty International, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, DefendDefenders, European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights, Forum-Asia, Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, Gulf Centre for Human Rights, Human Rights House Foundation, Human Rights Watch, IBAHTI, International Federation for Human Rights, Judges for Judges, LRWC, Ordre des Avocats de Genève, Redress, Trial, and Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice. Supported by the Permanent Missions of Belgium, Columbia, Costa Rica, Estonia, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Luxemburg, Mexico, Norway, Sierra Leone, Slovenia and Sweden. The panel included a keynote address by the UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, Ms. Margaret Satterthwaite. See the poster.

