



The Law Society  
of England and Wales



Human Rights  
Institute



MEMORIAL  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
DEFENCE CENTRE



Organization: Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

Item 4: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation

Date: 22 September 2025

Speaker: Catherine Morris

**Oral Statement to the 60<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Human Rights Council from Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC), the International Bar Association, The Law Society, NGOs in special consultative status, and endorsed by OVD-Info and Memorial Human Rights Defense Center, NGOs without consultative status**

### **“Seismic decline” in Russia’s human rights situation**

Mr. President,

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada, the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, the Law Society of England and Wales, with endorsement by OVD-Info and Memorial Human Rights Defense Center, concur with the Special Rapporteur that human rights in Russia are facing “seismic decline.”<sup>1</sup>

Russia has escalated its repression of lawyers who face discipline, disbarment, prosecution, or imprisonment for carrying out their professional duties. The resulting denial of independent lawyers of choice contributes to unfair trials in courts that lack independence. Dozens of lawyers and human rights defenders are among Russia's 1,656 arbitrarily detained persons. Among them is lawyer Maria Bontsler, who is being prosecuted for her professional legal work in cases involving politically motivated charges.

A proposed law “On Advocacy and the Legal Profession” would expand Ministry of Justice oversight of lawyers, further threatening their independence. Laws on “foreign agents” and “undesirable organizations” are used to curtail lawyers' and defenders' freedom of expression and association. Those charged with violating these overbroad laws may be subjected to trials in absentia and transnational repression of people living outside Russia.

It is clear that the continued work of the Special Rapporteur is essential. We urge the Council to adopt a strong resolution to renew the mandate.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> Situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, A/HRC/60.59, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session60/advance-version/a-hrc-60-59-acv.pdf>.