

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

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

LRWC at the UN Human Rights Council's 60th Session 8 September to 8 October 2025

During the 60th session of the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council, 8 September to 8 October 2025, Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC) led the drafting and delivery of eight oral statements, including six oral video statements and two oral statements delivered in person. LRWC also joined other NGOs in five additional joint oral statements, summarized and linked below.

LRWC delivered joint statements with NGOs with UN ECOSOC consultative status, including:

- International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI);
- Law Society of England and Wales (LSEW);
- Lawyers for Lawyers (L4L);
- International Commission of Jurists (ICJ).

LRWC also worked with NGOs without consultative status, including:

- two NGOs working on human rights and legal issues in Russia, OVD-Info and the Memorial Human Rights Defense Center (Memorial);
- Asian Lawyers' Network (ALN);
- Judges for Judges (J4J) based in the Netherlands; and

LRWC joined two pre-session advocacy letters led by the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (Defend Defenders). LRWC co-sponsored a side event on protection of environmental lawyers led by the ICJ, L4L and IBAHRI.

Major themes and highlights of the 60th session

- **Investigative mechanism for international crimes and violations in Afghanistan.** A welcome new development during the 60th session was the unanimous resolution of the Council to create an international Independent Investigative Mechanism (IIM) for Afghanistan. LRWC has been among numerous NGOs that have been advocating for an IIM for Afghanistan since 2022.
- **Countries and themes emphasised by LRWC:** During the 60th session, LRWC highlighted ongoing human rights violations in Afghanistan, China, Iran, Myanmar, Russia, Sri Lanka, and Cambodia, as well as escalating obstruction and criminalization of the legitimate work of environmental lawyers worldwide. LRWC also emphasized unlawful sanctions by United States (US) against International Criminal Court (ICC) judges and prosecutors, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and several Palestinian NGOs. See further detail below.

- **UN human rights system: Funding crisis.** A major theme during the 60th session was the intensifying UN human rights system’s “liquidity crisis,” created in large part by US withdrawal of funding. There are major [concerns](#) about current and forthcoming cuts to funding of UN human rights bodies and mechanisms, which comprise one of the UN’s essential and interconnected [three pillars](#) – peace and security, human rights, and development.

Summary of oral statements, joint pre-session letters and side event

Oral statements (date order)

LRWC successfully obtained a number of viable speaking slots, not all of which could be taken up due to limitations in LRWC’s volunteer capacity for knowledgeable interventions. LRWC delivered or co-sponsored the following oral statements:

- **On 8 September 2025: Afghanistan: Forced Deportations, Gender Apartheid, and Targeted Killings.** LRWC’s oral video statement was joined by IBAHRI, LSEW, and J4J. See the [text](#) at LRWC or on the UN [extranet](#). See the full debate on [UN WebTV](#) beginning at 1:37:34. LRWC’s statement is found at [3:06:43](#).

6 October the Human Rights Council unanimously adopted a long-sought resolution ([60/2](#)) to create an independent investigative mechanism (IIM) to advance accountability for past and ongoing international crimes and grave human rights violations committed in Afghanistan. Led by the European Union, the resolution was adopted by consensus (“without a vote”). The IIM is mandated to collect and preserve evidence of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other grave human rights violations. While the IIM is expected to focus on the ongoing crime of gender persecution, its scope includes grave violations and crimes committed in Afghanistan by other perpetrators, including officials of the former government, non-State armed actors, and members of international forces. The IIM’s mandate includes identification of suspected perpetrators and preparation of documentation to support prosecutions in national and international courts. Afghanistan became a party to the Rome Statute of the ICC on 10 February 2003. Resolution 60/2 also extended the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan, which complements the mandate of the IIM.

- **8 September 2025: Myanmar: Endless cycle of human rights violations and atrocity crimes by junta.** LRWC’s oral video statement was co-sponsored by IBAHRI. See the [report](#) of the UN High Commissioner and the IIM for Myanmar. See the statement on the [LRWC website](#) or the UN [extranet](#). See the video on UN WebTV at [02:22:00](#).
- **8 September 2025: Myanmar: Ongoing systematic atrocity crimes.** To supplement its advocacy on Myanmar (above, page 2), LRWC also co-sponsored an oral video statement led by IBAHRI and also joined by the Law Council of Australia, ICJ and LSEW. See IBAHRI’s statement on the [IBA’s website](#).
- **9 September: Sri Lanka must deliver on its promises for past atrocities.** LRWC delivered an oral video statement urging the Council to renew the Sri Lanka Accountability Project. See the debate on Sri Lanka at [UN WebTV](#) starting at 2:37:51, continued at

<https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1v/k1vfrtefd7>. LRWC's statement, delivered during the subsequent general debate, is at [2:39:40](#) (note that the first part of audio is the Arabic translation due to an error at the UN). See the text on the [UN extranet](#) or the [LRWC website](#). The Council adopted a consensus resolution to renew the mandate of the Office of the High Commissioner in Sri Lanka, [resolution 60/1](#), which also mandated a "report on progress in reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka" to be delivered at the 66th session (fall 2028).

- **17 September 2025: Environmental lawyers face escalating reprisals for their legitimate work.** LRWC co-sponsored an oral video statement led by L4L, also joined by the IBAHRI, and the LSEW, expressing concern about obstruction and criminalization of environmental lawyers in the context of climate change. See the text of the statement on the [UN extranet](#). This statement continues the campaign launched by [L4L in its report](#) of June 2025 on escalating reprisals and criminalisation of environmental human rights lawyers. See the text of the joint statement on the [UN Website](#). LRWC also joined a side event on this topic (see page 5).
- **18 September 2025: China: Systematic arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances of human rights lawyers and defenders.** LRWC's oral video statement was joined by IBAHRI, LSEW, L4L and ALN. See the text on the [LRWC website](#). See the video on [UN WebTV](#) at [02:08:28](#). The statement urged the Council to heed the calls of human rights experts who have for years called for a mechanism to monitor and report on human rights in China.
- **18 September: USA: Sanctions targeting ICC and UN Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territory.** LRWC joined the IBAHRI and Judges for Judges, in an oral video statement condemning the imposition of further sanctions by the US targeting the International Criminal Court and the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in the Palestinian Occupied Territory. See the text of the statement on the [IBA website](#).
- **19 September: Belarus: Lawyers under attack, arbitrary detention and transnational repression of lawyers.** LRWC joined the oral video statement led by the LSEW and also joined by IBAHRI and L4L. See the statement on the [UN extranet](#).
- **22 September 2025: Russia: "Seismic decline" in Russia's human rights situation.** LRWC's statement was joined by the IBAHRI and LSEW, with endorsement by OVD-Info and Memorial Human Rights Defense Center. LRWC's statement was delivered in person. See the statement on the UN Extranet or on the [LRWC website](#). See the [Special Rapporteur's report](#). Watch the full debate on the report on [UN WebTV](#) starting at 14:00. See LRWC's statement at [01:37:36](#). The statement urged renewal of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on human rights in Russia, which the Council did in resolution adopted by a [vote](#), 20 in favour, 8 opposed, and 18 abstaining.
- **22 September 2025: Russia: Ongoing systematic targeting of lawyers.** LRWC supplemented its advocacy on Russia (above, page 3) by co-sponsoring the statement of IBAHRI which was also joined by LSEW and L4L. See the text of IBAHRI's statement on the [IBA website](#).

- **23 September 2025: Iran: Crackdown on human rights.** LRWC delivered an oral video statement, joined by the IBAHRI. See the text on the [LRWC website](#). Watch the statement on [UN WebTV](#) at [1:25:23](#).
- **25 September: United States: Halt sanctions against Council Special Procedures, ICC jurists and human rights defenders.** In addition to co-sponsoring IBAHRI's 18 September 2025 statement on this issue (above), LRWC drafted and delivered a statement joined by IBAHRI and LSEW and endorsed by Judges for Judges. LRWC's statement was delivered in person. Watch the statement on [UN WebTV](#) at [2:44:24](#). See the text on the [LRWC website](#).
- **3 October 2025: Cambodia: Further deterioration of the rule of law.** LRWC's oral video statement was cosponsored by ICJ and IBAHRI. See the Special Rapporteur's report at [A/HRC/60/86](#). See the text of the statement on the UN [Extranet](#) or the [LRWC website](#). Watch the debate on [UN WebTV](#) at 00:43:36. LRWC's statement is at [01:50:46](#). The statement urged renewal of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur, which the Council did by adopting [resolution 60/33](#) by consensus.
- **3 October 2025: Cambodia: Challenges facing lawyers and access to justice in Cambodia.** In addition to its statement (above), LRWC supplemented its advocacy on Cambodia by co-sponsoring a statement by IBAHRI, which was also joined by L4L. See the IBAHRI statement on the [UN extranet](#) or the [IBA website](#).

Joint letters to the UN Human Rights Council

- **14 August 2025: Sudan's grave human rights and humanitarian situation: The world's largest displacement crisis.** LRWC joined a sign-on letter led by Defend Defenders urging the extension of the mandate of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for Sudan. See the [joint letter](#). The Council extended the mandate, adopting [resolution 60/3](#) by a [vote](#) of 24 in favour, 11 against, and 12 abstaining.
- **20 August 2025: Burundi's human rights violations continue with impunity: Legal system used against opponents, journalists and human rights defenders.** LRWC joined a sign-on letter led by Defend Defenders urging the extension of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Burundi. See the [joint letter](#). The Council adopted [resolution 60/15](#) to extend the mandate, with a [vote](#) of 23 in favour, 9 against, and 15 abstaining.
- **23 September 2025: Threat of further US sanctions against the International Criminal Court.** LRWC joined a statement by the Coalition on the ICC warning about reported US plans to sanction the International Criminal Court (ICC) as an institution. The action would follow a series of designations, first against ICC judges, prosecutors, the UN special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and several Palestinian NGOs. The statement urges States, civil society, academics, journalists, and others committed to international justice and rule of law to support and defend the ICC.

Side event

- **22 September 2025: Protecting environmental lawyers: Advancing Climate Justice.** LRWC co-sponsored a side event on protection of environmental/climate change lawyers, cosponsored by the ICJ, L4L, IBAHRI, International Service for Human Rights, LRWC, and others. Speakers included Michel Forst, Special Rapporteur for Climate Change under the Aarhus Convention, and Astrid Puentes Riaño, UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights to a Healthy Environment. See more information on [LRWC's website](#). The side event was recorded and can be [viewed online](#).

