



Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

Item 3: Interactive Dialogue on the report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association

Date: 23 June 2026

Speaker: Catherine Morris

Oral Statement to the 62nd Session of the UN Human Rights Council from Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada, the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, and Zagros Human Rights Center (Centre Zagros pour les Droits de l'Homme), NGOs in special consultative status, and endorsed by Memorial Human Rights Defense Center, OVD-Info, and the Centre for Supporters of Human Rights, NGOs without consultative status

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada and the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, and other NGOs [listed on the extranet version of the statement], share the Special Rapporteur's concerns¹ about the chilling effects of digital surveillance. Human rights defenders, including women defenders, face particular dangers.

Authorities in Iran use surveillance cameras to target women defenders resisting compulsory hijab laws.

In Afghanistan, Taliban authorities use digital surveillance to track down peaceful activists to arrest or threaten them or their families.

Russia has falsely identified several human rights NGOs as "extremist organizations," including Memorial and OVD-Info, blocking their right of association with lawyers and defenders within and outside Russia. Even to repost these NGOs' social media messages can result in criminal charges punishable by up to six years imprisonment.

Palestinian defenders are subjected to digital surveillance by Israeli authorities. Unlawful sanctions by the United States against three Palestinian rights NGOs, International Criminal Court judges and prosecutors, and the Special Rapporteur on Occupied Palestinian Territories, feature reported surveillance along with denial of access to online services and social media.

We call for urgent adoption of international and national legal frameworks to ensure protection of defenders and for a binding international instrument on digital surveillance technologies.

Thank you.

¹ Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, A/HRC/62/45, <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/62/45>; Gina Romero, Pete Fussey, Daragh Murray, "Pushed Into the Shadows": Evidencing digital surveillance chilling effects and the erosion of the rights to freedom of assembly and of association, April 2026, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/studies-and-research/pushed-shadows-evidencing-digital-surveillance-chilling-effects-and>