



The Law Society
of England and Wales



MEMORIAL
HUMAN RIGHTS
DEFENCE CENTRE



Human Rights
Institute

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

Item 4: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation¹

21 September 2026

Speaker: Catherine Morris

Joint Oral Statement to the 63rd Session of the UN Human Rights Council from Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC), the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, the Law Society of England and Wales, and Lawyers for Lawyers, NGOs in special consultative status, and endorsed by OVD-Info, and Memorial Human Rights Defense Center, NGOs without consultative status

Russia: Escalating attacks on jurists and human rights defenders including transnational repression

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada, the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, the Law Society of England and Wales, and Lawyers for Lawyers, with endorsement by OVD-Info, and Memorial Human Rights Defense Center, deplore Russia's continued misuse of national security laws² to stigmatize and criminalize dissent and human rights advocacy.³

Lawyers and human rights defenders have been designated as "foreign agents," "undesirable,"⁴ or "extremist" to punish their reporting of rights violations. We are dismayed by the designations of OVD-Info⁵ and the vaguely described "international Memorial movement"⁶ as "extremist" organizations, in reprisal for their legitimate advocacy.

Lawyers increasingly face the same charges as their clients, and those arbitrarily detained face torture, ill-treatment, and obstacles to legal representation.⁷

An escalating pattern of *in absentia* proceedings against persons outside Russia has included unfair proceedings and prison sentences against International Criminal Court judges.⁸

Russia recently passed new laws to place restrictive measures against persons outside Russia deemed to be evading punishment. The new laws are said to inflict "civic death" by imposing restrictions on banking and consular services such as passport renewals.⁹

The escalation of violations shows the necessity of independent, international monitoring by the Special Rapporteur. We urge the Council to renew the mandate with adequate resources to ensure its fulfilment.

Thank you.

¹ 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/63/60, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session63/advance-versions/a-hrc-63-60-aev-14th.pdf>.

² Special Procedures joint statement, “Strategy of blatant abuse of counter-terrorism and extremism laws to destroy Russian civil society must end: UN experts,” 09 April 2026, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2026/04/strategy-blatant-abuse-counter-terrorism-and-extremism-laws-destroy-russian>

³ AL RUS 3/2026, 7 April 2026, <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=30871>

⁴ E.g. Committee to Protect Journalists, European Prison Litigation Network, Human Rights Watch (HRW), ILGA, International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), International Commission of Jurists, Stichting Justice Initiative, and World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT). See “Briefing Paper on the Human Rights Situation in the Russian Federation,” Human Rights Watch, 24 August 2026, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2026/08/24/briefing-paper-on-the-human-rights-situation-in-the-russian-federation>.

⁵ OVD-Info, “OVD-Info has been designated an extremist organisation. What does this mean for us, for you, and for people in Russia?”, 26 August 2026, <https://ovdinfo.legal/en/instruction/ovd-info-extremist-organisation>.

⁶ Human Rights Watch, Russia: Memorial Rights Group Declared ‘Extremist’, 10 April 2026, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2026/04/10/russia-memorial-rights-group-declared-extremist>

⁷, AL RUS 2/2026, 23 January 2026, <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=30716>; UA RUS 15/2025, 21 April 202, : <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=30605>.

⁸ AL RUS 1/2026, <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=30710>; Russia must end reprisals and intimidation of ICC Prosecutor and judges: UN Special Rapporteurs, 4 February 2026 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2026/02/russia-must-end-reprisals-and-intimidation-icc-prosecutor-and-judges-un>.

⁹ New Russian law inflicts “civic death” on Government critics abroad as “traitors to the Motherland”: UN Special Rapporteur, 13 August 2026, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2026/08/new-russian-law-inflicts-civic-death-government-critics-abroad-traitors>