

LRWC, the United Nations, and the International Criminal Court

Report
19 October 2026

From July to October, 2026, LRWC continued to contribute to the work of the UN Human Rights Council. LRWC also contributed to the work of the International Criminal Court (ICC) through cooperation with the Coalition for the ICC (CICC).

Human Rights Council, 63rd Session, 7 September - 7 October 2026 (HRC63)

During the 63rd session of the UN Human Rights Council, 7 September to 7 October 2026, LRWC led the drafting and delivery of six joint oral video statements concerning human rights in Cambodia, China, Iran, Russia, Sri Lanka, and the United States (US), and attacks against the ICC. LRWC also co-sponsored statements or letters to Human Rights Council members prepared by other NGOs on human rights in Belarus, Burundi, Cambodia, Iran, Nicaragua, Russia, and Sudan. LRWC drafted and submitted a written statement on the situation of lawyers in Iran and joined another NGO's written statement on Iran. LRWC also joined a pre-session advocacy submission to the Council. LRWC was among the co-sponsors of a side-event on the situation of Russian lawyers held on 23 Sept 2026.



Palais de Nations, Geneva.

UN Human Rights Council, 63rd session

During the 63rd session, LRWC worked closely with NGOs with UN ECOSOC consultative status, including:

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

LRWC also worked with NGOs without consultative status, including:

- Asian Lawyers' Network (ALN), an NGO focussed on rights of lawyers and legal activists throughout the Asia region who subject to arbitrary detention, sanctions, or harassment);
- Centre for Supporters of Human Rights (CSHR), a UK-based NGO with focus on human rights in the Middle East, particularly Iran;
- Judges for Judges (J4J), a Netherlands-based NGO with focus on judges around the world;
- OVD-Info, NGO focused on legal representation and human rights in Russia); and
- Memorial Human Rights Defence Centre, an NGO focused on legal representation and human rights in Russia.

HRC63 Written statements

- **“The Dismantling of Independent Legal Defense in Iran: Lawyers Under Attack.”**
LRWC led the drafting of a joint written statement on the situation of lawyers in Iran and was joined by the International Bar Association’s Human Rights institute, the Law Society of England and Wales, and Lawyers for Lawyers with endorsement by the Centre for Supporters of Human Rights (CSHR). The written is published on the [LRWC website](#) and on the UN [HRC63 website](#).
- **“The Islamic Republic of Iran: Systemic and Sustained Attacks against Lawyers and the Legal Profession Following the Protests which Began on 28 December 2025.”**
Lawyers for Lawyers led the drafting of this statement which was joined by LRWC. The joint written statement is published on the UN [HRC63 website](#).

HRC63 Oral video statements

LRWC was successful in obtaining six speaking slots. Many other issues and situations in other countries are of ongoing concern, including Afghanistan, Myanmar, Turkey, worldwide deterioration of the rule of law, and the overall financial crisis of the UN, particularly affecting the ability of the UN human rights system, including independent experts, to adequately fulfil their mandates.

LRWC worked with other human rights organizations to deliver or co-sponsor the following oral statements (in date order):

- **7 September: Sri Lanka must be held accountable for mass graves in Chemmani.** LRWC drafted and delivered a statement, joined by the International Bar Association’s Human Rights Institute, registering grave concern about lack of meaningful progress toward justice and accountability for atrocity crimes committed in Sri Lanka, including documentation of surveillance, intimidation and harassment of human rights defenders and family members monitoring the excavation of mass graves. The statement called for full cooperation by Sri Lanka’s government with the UN [OHCHR Accountability Project](#) in collection and preservation of evidence for potential criminal proceedings before domestic, foreign, or international courts. See the text of the statement on [LRWC’s website](#) or the [UN website](#). The video is at [UN WebTV](#) at 02:10:27.
- **7 September 2026: Independent International Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) for the Sudan.** Lawyers for Lawyers drafted and delivered a statement, joined by LRWC and the IBAHRI. The statement noted the FFM’s finding of “brutal and systematic targeting of civilians,” as well as the “dismantling of Sudan's justice system by both parties to the conflict.” There have been at least 16 lawyers and suspension or disbarment of at least 31 lawyers by disciplinary bodies “lacking a recognised legal mandate.” The Statement called on the Council to extend the mandate of the FFM by two years. See the joint statement on the [UN Website](#). The Council adopted a resolution to extend the mandate by [one year](#) by a recorded [vote](#) of 28 for, 10 against and 9 abstentions.

- **14 September 2026: China’s continued failure to ensure fair trials and protect lawyers.** LRWC drafted and delivered a statement, joined by the LSEW, L4L, and the IBAHTI and endorsed by the Asian Lawyers Network pointing out that despite Universal Periodic Review commitments in 2024, China “persists in subjecting lawyers to threats; disbarment; arbitrary detention and prosecution; unfair trials; forced exile; transnational repression, incommunicado detention, enforced disappearance; torture and ill-treatment.” The statement urged China to accept request of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention for a country visit, guarantee fair trials, and access to lawyers of choice, release all lawyers arbitrarily detained in China and Hong Kong SAR, and repeal or amend Hong Kong SAR’s National Security Law and Article 23 legislation, and ensure that laws fulfil international standards. The statement also called for an update of the OHCHR’s 2022 report on Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. See the statement on the [LRWC website](#) or the UN website: [UN website](#). Watch on UN WebTV at [UN WebTV](#) at 02:57:32.
- **18 September 2026: Repression of the legal profession in Belarus** The LSEW drafted and delivered an oral video statement, joined by LRWC, L4L and J4J, expressing grave concerns about ongoing reprisals against lawyers for exercising their professional duties, the erosion of judicial independence, and arbitrary interference by the Ministry of Justice in licensing and disciplinary proceedings. At least seven lawyers remain imprisoned, and intimidation and disbarment of other lawyers continues. The statement expressed dismay at the sentencing of lawyer Dmitri Laevski to three years' imprisonment on 9 September 2026 on charges of facilitating extremist activities and discrediting the Republic of Belarus because of media interviews in 2020 and 2021. See the statement on the [UN Website](#).
- **18 September 2026: Item 4: Interactive dialogue on the report of the High Commissioner on the situation of human rights in Nicaragua** Lawyers for Lawyers drafted and delivered a statement on Nicaragua, joined by LRWC. The statement raised concern about denial of the right to legal representation of one’s choosing in Nicaragua, where lawyers face persecution, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance and exile as a consequence of the exercise of their professional duties. In July 2026, the Supreme Court removed at least 2,000 lawyers from its registry, without prior proceedings or official notification. The statement urged the Council to maintain scrutiny of attacks on the independence of the legal profession and their consequences for access to justice and the rule of law in Nicaragua, and urged the Government of Nicaragua to re-establish cooperation with the UN, allow the OHCHR access to the country, and ensure that lawyers can perform their professional duties independently and without interference or reprisals. See the full statement (English and Spanish) on the [LRWC website](#).

Concern about the human rights crisis in Nicaragua is now a matter of grave, widespread concern. At the 60th session of the Human Rights Council in October 2025, the Council adopted a [decision](#) on Nicaragua’s non-cooperation with the 4th cycle of the Universal Periodic Review. At the 63rd session, a cross-regional group of 47 States led by Costa Rica delivered a [joint statement](#) expressing regret at Nicaragua’s refusal to cooperate with the UPR and rejecting the government’s announcement that no further elections will be held in Nicaragua with opposition parties. The Council adopted without a vote [Resolution A/HRC/DEC/63/116](#) calling on

Nicaragua to resume its cooperation with the UPR mechanism and postponing consideration of the Nicaragua's UPR until the Council's 65th session to be held in June/July 2027.

- **21 September 2026: Russia: Escalating attacks on jurists and human rights defenders including transnational repression.** Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada drafted and delivered a statement, joined by the IBAHRI, LSEW, L4L, and endorsed by OVD-Info, Memorial Human Rights Defense Center, deploring Russia's continued misuse of national security laws to stigmatize and criminalize dissent and human rights advocacy, and expressing dismay about the designations of OVD-Info and the "international Memorial movement" as "extremist" organizations, in reprisal for their legitimate advocacy. The statement also expressed concern that "lawyers increasingly face the same charges as their clients, and those arbitrarily detained face torture, ill-treatment, and obstacles to legal representation." Russia has also engaged in transnational repression and has used *in absentia* proceedings to conduct unfair proceedings and prison sentences against ICC judges. See the full text on the [LRWC website](#) and on the [UN Website](#). Video at [UN WebTV](#) at 51:37. Also see the Special Rapporteur's report to the Human Rights Council A/HRC/63/60 in [English](#) and [русский](#) (Russian), entitled "Nowhere is safe: exporting the rule of fear beyond borders – transnational repression by the Russian Federation." Also see a 22 September 2026 [press conference](#) (English) with the Special Rapporteur. LRWC also co-sponsored two further joint statements on the targeting of lawyers and the independence of the legal profession by Russia, one drafted and delivered by [IBAHRI](#) (search for IBAHRI), and another by [LSEW](#).
- **21 September 2026: Grave concern about persecution of lawyers in Iran**
LRWC co-sponsored a video statement drafted and delivered by LSEW and also joined by the IBAHRI and L4L expressing grave concern about increasing persecution of lawyers in Iran in 2026, including arbitrary and incommunicado detention, ill-treatment and denial of medical care. Women lawyers face additional discrimination. Families of lawyers forced into exile face intimidation and reprisals. The joint statement pointed out that dismantling defence by independent lawyers "removes a fundamental safeguard against coerced confessions, torture, unfair trials and arbitrary execution." See the full joint oral video statement at on the [UN website](#). Also see LRWC's joint written statement summarized above and found on the [LRWC website](#).
- **21 September 2026 (GD4): United States: Executive interference with independence of immigration judges.**
LRWC led the drafting of a statement, joined by the IBAHRI and the LSEW, and endorsed by Judges for Judges, draw the Council's attention to US targeted firings since February 2025 of over 100 immigration judges mandated to conduct individualized reviews of immigration cases according to law. The US administration has replaced terminated judges with so-called "deportation judges," and issued directives to judges as to its preferred outcomes. Immigration courts now have a large backlog of cases, putting migrants, including children, at risk of indefinite detention, deportation without due process, and potential refoulement. The joint statement urged the Council to call on the US "to comply with their international law obligations to ensure protection of rights of migrants, including freedom from arbitrary detention, and fair and timely hearings before impartial tribunals." See the text of statement on the [LRWC website](#) or the [UN website](#). See the video on [UN WebTV](#) at 01:32:05.

- **24 September: Protection of human rights as a foundational pillar of the United Nations: Attacks on UN bodies by China, Russia, United States**

LRWC led the drafting of a statement joined by the IBAHRI and endorsed by Judges for Judges. The statement noted that UN human rights bodies set up to protect rights and the rule of law are being systemically obstructed by powerful States, including China, Russia and the US, and called for “urgent steps to ensure funding and protection of UN human rights bodies, the ICC, and the jurists, defenders, and victims who cooperate with them.” See the text of the statement on the [LRWC website](#). See the video on [UN WebTV](#) at 01:41:34.

- **2 October 2026. Cambodia: Halt impunity for human rights violations including transnational repression**

Lawyers’ Rights Watch Canada drafted and delivered an oral video statement, joined by the ICJ, IBAHRI and L4L pointing out Cambodia’s longstanding lack of response to UN concerns about: independence of the judiciary and legal profession; adequate, independent legal aid; and independent and impartial investigations of rights violations. While considerable international attention has focussed on the human rights crises associated with the continued displacement of tens of thousands of Cambodians after the July and December 2025 international armed conflict with Thailand, as well as the massive human trafficking and scam centre along the Cambodia border with Thailand. These major issues are rooted in Cambodia’s failure to fulfil its obligations under international human rights law in Cambodia.

LRWC’s oral video statement noted Cambodia’s continued and long-standing pattern of harassment, unfair trials, arbitrary detention of human rights defenders, and transnational repression of defenders and dissidents, as well as impunity for unlawful killings, enforced disappearances, and abduction and refoulement of defenders to other countries, including the enforced disappearances of defenders Nguyen Duc Thuan and Tran Hiep, who were reportedly abducted in Cambodia on 18 September 2026 and forcibly taken to Viet Nam where they now face fabricated terrorism charges. See the full joint statement on the [LRWC website](#) or the [UN Website](#), Watch the debate on [UN WebTV](#) starting at 1:23:20, with LRWC’s statement at 2:25:00.

LRWC also [co-sponsored](#) an oral video statement by the IBAHRI, also joined by L4L, Article 19, and Forum Asia expressing concern about media freedom in Cambodia, including prosecution of journalists for their legitimate reporting.

Other activities related to the UN Human Rights Council

- **21 August 2026: Sudan: Extend the Fact-Finding Mission’s mandate and ensure adequate resources for investigations and reporting.** Ahead of the 63rd session of the Council, LRWC was among 68 NGOs to join a [letter](#) led by Defend Defenders addressed to members of the UN Human Rights Council seeking extension of the mandate of Sudan’s UN Fact-Finding Mission’s (FFM) for two years. The letter urges Council members to support a resolution that ensured that the FFM has adequate resources to fulfil its mandate to investigate ongoing grave violations, collect and preserve evidence, and identify perpetrators with a view to ensuring that they are held accountable. LRWC has previously advocated on Sudan but has

no current monitor. Lawyers and human rights defenders currently face grave risks in Sudan, including enforced disappearances and arbitrary criminal proceedings including lengthy arbitrary detention and capital punishment for exercising their professional responsibilities. The Council extended the mandate of the FFM for one year in resolution [A/HRC/63/L.26](#) adopted by a recorded vote, [28 for, 10 against, and 9 abstentions](#).

- **24 August 2026: Burundi: civil society urges continued scrutiny through the Special Rapporteur's mandate**

LRWC was among 40 NGOs to join a [letter](#) led by Defend Defenders and sent to members of the Human rights Council urging extension of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Burundi. Human rights violations and abuses in Burundi include extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests and detentions, torture and ill-treatment, sexual and gender-based violence, as well as widespread impunity, reduced space for civil society, citizen activism, independent media, and political participation, inhumane detention conditions, disregard for due process guarantees, and impunity. Independent actors and critical voices, including human rights defenders, anti-corruption activists, journalists and media professionals face severe constraints as the ruling party moves to completely close the country's civic space. LRWC has previously advocated on Burundi but has no monitor. In a recorded vote, the Council adopted resolution [A/HRC/63/L.13](#), [22 for, 7 against, with 17 abstentions](#). The resolution expressed "deep concern about the persistence of human rights violations and abuses in Burundi, and strongly condemning all cases of harassment, intimidation, reprisals, arbitrary arrest, prolonged detention and judicial prosecution of lawyers, human rights defenders, journalists and civil society actors..."

- **Mid-term report on China's performance on its commitments made pursuant to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR)**

On 1 September 2026, LSEW submitted a [mid-term report](#) on China's performance of its commitments made during its 2024 UPR. LRWC joined the report along with L4L, the IBAHRI, and the Asian Lawyers Network (ALN). The report demonstrates that two years after its 2024 UPR China continues to fail to deliver on its human rights commitments. The report features case studies showing that China persistently "continues to subject lawyers to harassment, surveillance, arbitrary prosecutions, unfair trials, arbitrary deprivation of liberty, travel bans, incommunicado detention, enforced disappearance, forced exile, transnational repression, torture and other forms of ill-treatment, simply for doing their job."

- **Afghanistan: Special Rapporteur's mandate renewed; call for swift operationalization of Investigative Mechanism**

While LRWC did not obtain a viable speaking slot to make a statement on Afghanistan, LRWC continues to monitor the situation of human rights in the country. At its 63rd session, the Human Rights Council adopted a consensus [resolution A/HRC/63/L.8](#) extending the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan. The resolution also calls for swift operationalisation of the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Afghanistan decided by the Council a year ago, in October 2025. The October 2026 resolution requires the Special Rapporteur to include a study on the situation of minorities in Afghanistan in his September 2027 report to the Council and requests the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

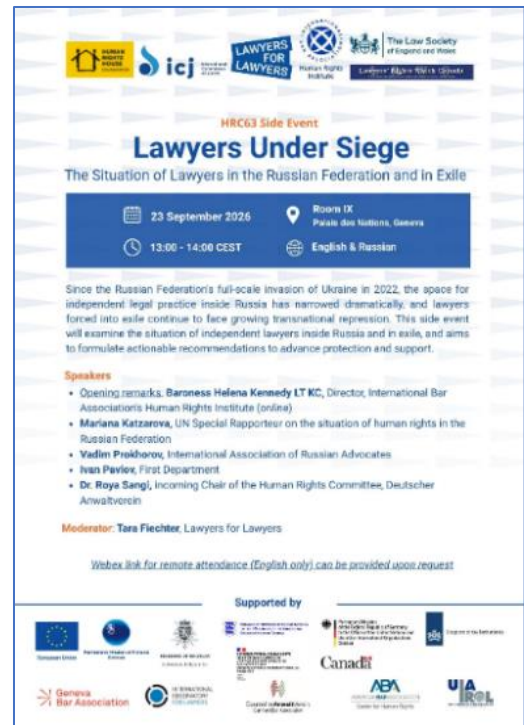
(OHCHR) to provide a report to the Council in March 2026 on the impact of the Taliban's dismantling of Afghanistan's legal and judicial framework.

Side Event at the 63rd session of the Human Rights Council, 23 September 2026

Lawyers Under Siege: The Situation of Lawyers in the Russian Federation and in Exile.

LRWC joined L4L, IBAHRI, ICJ, Human Rights House Foundation, and LSEW as co-sponsors of a side-event, entitled "[Lawyers Under Siege: The Situation of Lawyers in the Russian Federation and in Exile](#)", held 23 September 2026 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. The event was available in person and by video link with English and Russian language interpretation. Several other NGOs and embassies indicated support for the side event, including the Canadian Embassy. Speakers were:

- Baroness Helena Kennedy LT KC, Director, IBAHRI;
- Mariana Katzarova, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation;
- Vadim Prokhorov, International Association of Russian Advocates;
- Ivan Pavlov, First Department;
- Dr. Roya Sangi, incoming Chair of the Human Rights Committee, Deutscher Anwaltverein;
- Moderator: Tara Fiechter, L4L.



Upcoming sessions of the Human Rights Council

LRWC plans to participate in upcoming [sessions](#) of the Council as follows:

- 64th session, 22 February – 2 April 2027;
- Dates of the 65th (June-July) and 66th (September-October) sessions in 2027 are not yet set.

International Criminal Court (ICC)

Since February 2025, the US has embarked on an escalating campaign of sanctions against the ICC, its judges, prosecutors, and senior personnel, as well as UN Special Procedures, and human rights organizations. Russia has criminally extraterritorially prosecuted ICC judges in unfair *in absentia* proceedings.

LRWC supports the work of the ICC in statements to the UN Human Rights Council, for example on 21 and 24 September 2026 (see above). In addition, LRWC continues to support the work of the ICC, including through its longstanding membership in the Coalition of the



International Criminal Court, The Hague.
(Wikimedia, photo by justfix)

International Criminal Court (CICC) as well as in partnership with other international legal organizations.

- **17 July 2026: Defending Justice: A call to reject the US Campaign Against the ICC**
LRWC supported a [statement by the CICC](#) condemning the US administration's escalation of its campaign against the ICC in a 13 July 2026 announcement of its intention to dismantle ICC through unilateral coercive measures including threats, financial pressure, additional sanctions against the Court and affiliated organisations, visa revocations, and efforts to persuade States parties to withdraw their support for the Court. Paramount among the statement's recommendations, was a call for States Parties to the Rome Statute of the ICC to publicly "oppose any initiatives aimed at weakening the Court and attempts to influence prosecutorial priorities..." and "reject any efforts to pressure states from withdrawing from the Rome Statue or preventing further ratifications."
- **24 September 2026: LRWC joins 38 international civil society organizations in joint amicus brief in US lawsuit challenging Trump's ICC sanctions**
Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC) on 24 September 2026, joined Amnesty International and 36 other civil society organizations from around the world in an amicus curiae ("friend of the court") [brief](#) filed in a US lawsuit challenging the legality of escalating sanctions imposed by the Donald J. Trump administration against the ICC under Executive Order (EO) 14203, dated 6 February 2025. The amicus brief was submitted in support of a lawsuit filed on 11 August 2026 by the American Friends Service Committee, the Center for Constitutional Rights, Human Rights Watch, and the Open Society Institute (*American Friends Service Committee, et al. v. Trump et al.*, Civil Action No. 26-cv-06830 in the District Court for the Southern District of New York. See LRWC's [press release](#).
- **9 October 2026: Institutional sanctions against the ICC escalate the unprecedented assault on international justice: Statement of the CICC**
On 9 October 2026, the US escalated its campaign against the ICC by issuing sanctions against the ICC as an institution. LRWC acted immediately in support a [statement](#) by the CICC calling on all States to immediately "activate and enforce blocking measures, including the EU Blocking Statute and equivalent national legislation, to shield the Court, its staff, assets and partners from the extraterritorial effects of US sanctions."
- **12 October 2026: Urgent Call for Action: States Must Act Now to Protect the ICC from Unlawful US Attacks**
The CICC on 12 October 2025 issued a [joint statement](#) that as of the date of publication of this report has been joined by more than 200 organisations from over 60 countries, and dozens of legal experts, human rights defenders and members of the European Parliament. LRWC is among the signatories. The statement condemns the US decision on 9 October 2026 to impose unlawful sanctions on the ICC.
- **14 October 2026: Canada: Urgent, concrete action needed to protect the ICC: Implement Canada's blocking legislation against US sanctions imposed on the Court.**
On 14 October, LRWC sent a [letter](#) to Canada's Prime Minister, Attorney General and Minister of Foreign Affairs, urging that Canada implement its *Foreign Extraterritorial Measures Act* to block the unlawful extraterritorial effects of the US sanctions.

- **16 October 2026: International legal community condemns US sanctions against the International Criminal Court: Joint statement**

LRWC joined 17 international legal organizations, led by the Law Society of England and Wales, in a 16 October 2026 [joint statement](#) condemning the 9 October 2026 sanctions imposed by the US government, implemented through the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), against the ICC.