

Side-event at the UN 47th Session of the Human Rights Council

Lawyers Under Threat: Increasing Suppression of the Legal Profession in Belarus

Tuesday July 6, 2021, 3:00pm–4:00pm CEST, Virtual Event Via Zoom

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS



BARONESS HELENA KENNEDY is the Director of the International Bar Association Human Rights Institute. Ms. Kennedy is a leading barrister and an expert in human rights law, civil liberties and constitutional issues. She has acted in many prominent cases including the Brighton Bombing Trial, Guildford Four Appeal, the bombing of the Israeli Embassy, and a number of key domestic violence cases. She is a member of the House of Lords and chair of Justice – the British arm of the International Commission of Jurists, and a bencher of Gray's Inn. She was the chair of Charter 88 from 1992 to 1997, the Human Genetics Commission from 1998 to 2007 and the British Council from 1998 to 2004. She also chaired the Power Inquiry, which reported on the state of British democracy and produced the Power Report in 2006. She has received honors for her work on human rights from the governments of France and Italy and has been awarded more than thirty honorary doctorates.

PATRICIA LEE REFO is the President of the American Bar Association, the largest voluntary association of attorneys and legal professionals in the world. As a partner at Snell & Wilmer in Phoenix, Ms. Refo concentrates on complex commercial litigation and internal investigations. She chairs the firm's Professional Liability Litigation Group. Ms. Refo has served on the Advisory Committee on the Federal Rules of Evidence of the United States Judicial Conference, appointed by Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist, and on the Arizona Supreme Court's Advisory Committee on Rules of Evidence. She is a member of the American Law Institute and its Litigation Advisory Panel and is a fellow of the American Bar Foundation and the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education.



DR. ANAÏS MARIN is the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Belarus, appointed in September 2018. She is a French political scientist specializing in IR, border, and Russian studies. In 2011, she joined the Finnish Institute of International Affairs, a Helsinki-based think tank, as the Belarus expert. In that capacity, she published academic articles, op-ed pieces, and policy briefs on Belarus' domestic and foreign policies, the EU's Eastern Partnership, and Eurasian geopolitics. Dr. Marin is a non-residential associate fellow with Chatham House, London, as an independent Belarus expert. She is also affiliated with the Centre of French Civilization at the University of Warsaw. Alongside her academic and policy advocacy activities, Dr. Marin regularly conducts election observation missions with the OSCE/ODIHR in post-Soviet countries.

RADMILA DICIC, a Commissioner of the International Commission of Jurists and a Judge of the Supreme Court of Serbia, is recognized for her dedication to the respect for human rights in criminal justice. She helped establish the Judges Association of Serbia in 1997 during the regime of Slobodan Milosevic. In 2000, shortly before the fall of Milosevic, Ms. Dicic was one of fifteen judges that were dismissed because of their opposition to the repressive regime. She was reinstated following the elections that took place later that year. Ms. Didic has worked on issues of organized crime and human trafficking. Ms. Didic has spoken out against women's continued obstacles in accessing justice and the importance of protecting victims of violence.



SOPHIE DE GRAAF is the Executive Director of Lawyers for Lawyers. Lawyers for Lawyers is an independent lawyers' organization which seeks to promote and protect the independence of the legal profession through the support of lawyers around the world, who face reprisals, improper interferences or restrictions in carrying out their professional functions. As Executive Director, Ms. De Graaf develops and manages Lawyers for Lawyers' global Defend, Empower and Influence programs to support lawyers at risk, empower them to fulfill their role as essential agents of the administration of justice, and to strengthen their international recognition and protection in laws, policies and practices at the national and international level, including through human rights mechanisms of the United Nations.

OLGA SALOMATOVA is the International Program Coordinator at the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Warsaw), one of the oldest non-governmental organizations acting in the field of human rights protection in Poland. Ms. Salomatova is a lawyer and an expert in international human rights law and international legal standards, as well as a leading expert on Belarus. Since 2011, Ms. Salomatova has run international educational programs aiming to build capacities of lawyers and human rights defenders from Belarus. She has extensive experience in human rights field work, including closed institution monitoring, freedom of assembly, and trial monitoring in Eastern Europe. She is a professional trainer on human rights education for legal professionals. Ms. Salomatova has presented before the Council of Europe and United Nations on the systemic violations of the rights of Belarusian attorneys.



LIUDMILA KAZAK is a Belarusian human rights lawyer renowned for her work representing defendants in politically motivated cases. Ms. Kazak was a lawyer in a high-profile case brought against Maria Kolesnikova. Ms. Kazak was detained in Minsk shortly before Ms. Kolesnikova's hearing and was subsequently unable to represent her. She was Ms. Kolesnikova's fourth lawyer who has been subjected to harassment and intimidation because of their identification with their client or their client's cause. On February 19, 2021, Ms. Kazak was disbarred for alleged unethical conduct as part of a wave of disbarments aimed at Belarusian lawyers with actual or perceived opposition sympathies.