

United Nations Human Rights Council
58th Regular Session
Agenda Item 4

Oral statement of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) in the interactive dialogue with the Group of Independent Experts on the Human Rights Situation in Belarus

Mr. President,

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) concurs with the report of the Group of Independent Experts, which emphasizes Belarus' entrenched human rights crisis characterized by the lack of fair trial guarantees, attacks on lawyers and a pervasive culture of impunity for crimes under international law.

The ICJ condemns the widespread human rights violations committed especially since May 2020, including thousands of spurious prosecutions, widespread torture and ill-treatment and arbitrary detention. Trials have been unduly expedited, with predetermined outcomes and flagrant violations of fair trial rights, including the denial of legal representation of one's choosing and *in absentia* conviction of individuals in exile.

Lawyers defending persons detained for political reasons have themselves faced harassment, arrest, prosecution, and arbitrary detention. Some have been criminally prosecuted, disbarred or forced into exile, leaving many such detainees without legal defence.

To date, those responsible for these violations constituting crimes under international law have enjoyed near total impunity, with no high-level or direct perpetrator held accountable.

The ICJ urges the Council to extend the mandates of the Group of Independent Experts and the Special Rapporteur and to ensure they are adequately resourced to effectively and swiftly pursue their complementary roles in advancing accountability for past and ongoing violations. We also call upon States to extend protection and support to victims and survivors, lawyers, and civil society members in exile, and to pursue accountability, including through application of universal and extra-territorial jurisdiction.

Thank you.

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