

**United Nations Human Rights Council  
59<sup>th</sup> Regular Session  
Agenda Item 3**

**Oral statement of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) in the Interactive  
Dialogue with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and  
Lawyers**

25 June 2025

Madam Special Rapporteur,

The ICJ shares your concerns at the upsurge of attacks on independent judges, lawyers and judicial systems in many countries across all regions of the globe, within a context where strains and fractures on the rule of law persist globally.

Regarding your recent visit to Guatemala, we concur with your concerns about an alarming pattern of misuse of the criminal law by the Public Prosecutor's Office against justice system professionals, human rights defenders, and anti-corruption actors. As you have recommended, it is critical that an independent evaluation mechanism for the Office be established and operationalized. As you have underlined, there are credible allegations of undue influence by political actors in judicial appointments, including "vote trafficking", coercion of Nominating Commissions, and flawed evaluation processes that reward political loyalty over merit. As the 2026 elections for Attorney General, Constitutional Court, and Supreme Electoral Court will be crucial to the viability of the rule of law in the country, we join you in urging institutions to ensure an independent, impartial, and effective judiciary in line with international standards.

Regarding Tunisia, since the President effectively dismantled the independent judiciary three years ago, attacks on judicial independence have continued, with the Ministry of Justice ordering 600 arbitrary and often punitive transfers, impacting 1,000 judges, outside of any legal process. As a result, the justice system has been instrumentalized, gravely threatening pre-trial and fair trial rights. Emblematically, on 19 April 2025, 37 political and other public figures, including lawyers, received harsh prison sentences following a mass sham trial in the so-called conspiracy case. Immediately afterward,

defence lawyer Ahmed Souab was arbitrarily detained and prosecuted for criticizing the verdict.

Madam Special Rapporteur, how can we protect those who are the last line of defence for the rule of law, like lawyers acting as human rights defenders in Tunisia?

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