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The Law Society
of England and Wales



**Human Rights
Institute**



Organization: Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada
Item 3: General debate
Date: 20 September 2023
Speaker: Catherine Morris

Oral Statement to the 54th Session of the UN Human Rights Council from Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC), the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, Lawyers for Lawyers, and the Law Society of England and Wales, NGOs in special consultative status, and endorsed by The 29 Principles, and Chinese Human Rights Defenders, NGOs not in consultative status.

China: Systematic arbitrary detention of human rights lawyers and defenders

Mr. President,

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada, the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, Lawyers for Lawyers, and the Law Society of England and Wales, along with endorsing NGOs, condemn China's systematic arbitrary detention of numerous human rights advocates and lawyers, along with failure to implement Special Procedures' and Treaty Bodies' recommendations.

For example, lawyer Gao Zhisheng was arbitrarily detained and disappeared in 2017. Despite several Special Procedures communications, his whereabouts remain unknown.

China also engages in transnational repression, such as the July 2023 arrest of Chinese lawyer Lu Siwei by Lao PDR authorities, who failed to disclose his whereabouts and have reportedly secretly refoiled him to China, without any due process, after China asked Laos to hand him over. He remains arbitrarily detained and forcibly disappeared.

The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention recently noted violations by China in over 100 cases, indicating "a systemic problem with arbitrary detention." They recalled that in certain circumstances systematic arbitrary detention "may constitute crimes against humanity."

We urge China to abide by GA Resolution 60/251 which requires all Council members to uphold the highest standards of human rights and fully cooperate with the Council.

Thank you.