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ADVANCEMENT AND GLOBAL DIALOGUE

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Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers

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PRESENTATION OF THE THEMATIC REPORT

Ms. Margaret SATTERTHWAITE, Special Rapporteur (SR) on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers

The SR introduces her new thematic report dedicated to the **right of Indigenous peoples to maintain and develop justice systems**. For countless generations, Indigenous peoples have repaired harm and ensured and maintained balance within communities through their justice systems. These systems have also advanced access to justice for Indigenous peoples. They resolve disputes, restore harmony, and protect rights in ways that are culturally resonant, responsive, accessible, and effective. Studies show that there is less crime, more durable conflict resolution, and greater biodiversity on the lands where Indigenous law is freely applied.

Indigenous peoples' justice systems are inextricably tied to the **self-determination of Indigenous peoples**, and thus an element of their identities, continued survival, vitality, and development. Their right to self-determination as enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights



of Indigenous Peoples and numerous other sources, includes the right of Indigenous peoples to develop, operate, and preserve independent Indigenous justice systems.

Still, the recognition of **Indigenous peoples' own justice systems and customary law** remains limited, and their status varies greatly across countries and regions. In some states, these systems are not recognised at all. In other places, the ordinary legal system neither recognises nor prohibits Indigenous peoples' justice systems, leaving some space for their *de facto* exercise. Still other countries have officially recognised Indigenous peoples' justice systems, but place restrictions on their jurisdiction, or subordinate them to ordinary courts.

For these reasons, the thematic report examines both good practises and remaining challenges to the recognition of Indigenous peoples' justice systems. This reports falls within the SR's mandate on two grounds. First, the mandate requires the SR to record and respond to attacks against judges, lawyers, and other justice operators. **Indigenous justice operators are under attack** in many parts of the world, because their justice systems are not accorded recognition and resources.

Second, the mandate requires the SR to recommend ways to improve judicial systems. All judicial systems need improvement, and they can do better in **ensuring access to justice for all**. This requires recognising and engaging with Indigenous justice systems where they exist, to ensure the right to access justice for all. This recognition will also translate into improvements in ordinary justice systems, which will better understand how to interact with Indigenous justice systems, once they have a clearly recognised place in the national justice system.

The thematic report builds on the recommendations made by preceding SRs and draws upon the earlier work of the SR on the rights of Indigenous peoples, the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP), and various UN human rights treaty bodies and other international authorities and experts. Deeply indebted to the **input and writings of Indigenous judges, scholars, and leaders** consulted during the preparation of the report, the SR concludes her presentation by reaffirming her firm commitment to defending the independence of all justice actors, including those within Indigenous systems.

PRESENTATION OF COMMUNICATIONS TO STATES

According to **international standards**, states must ensure that judges and lawyers are able to perform their professional duties without restriction, improper influence, inducement, pressure, threats, or interference, whether direct or indirect from any source. Communications have been addressed to a range of states concerning violations of these principles. In **Eswatini**, no meaningful progress has been achieved in the investigation into the brutal killing of lawyer Tulani Maseko, an omission that continues to exert a chilling effect on the legal profession. In **Haiti**, the killing of Judge Maxime Castel and credible reports of numerous summary executions allegedly committed by a member of the prosecution service are matters of grave concern. These incidents must be promptly and impartially investigated, and those responsible must be brought to justice.



This year's **Endangered Lawyer's Day** draws attention to **Belarus**, where lawyers continue to face severe repression, including disbarment, arbitrary detention, imprisonment, and forced exile. The case of Maxim Znak is emblematic. Sentenced to ten years in a closed trial for representing opposition figures, he has been held in incommunicado detention since February 2023. His case underscores the grave risks faced by lawyers acting in defence of human rights and the rule of law. This treatment must cease immediately. Mr. Znak must be granted access to lawyers, independent medical professionals, and contact with his family. Judges also face similar risks. In **Ethiopia**, 35 judges and 14 public prosecutors were arbitrarily arrested and detained by police in late 2024, raising serious concerns about the erosion of judicial independence and due process.

The **ongoing trend of autocratization**, previously reported in 2024, has continued to intensify, with legal professionals and justice operators increasingly targeted. These individuals central to ensuring accountability and upholding the rule of law face mounting threats, frequently amplified through social media and, in some cases, legitimized by public officials. Such acts represent a serious challenge to judicial independence and the integrity of legal institutions.

In **Costa Rica**, concerns are noted regarding the public disparagement of lawyers and judges, including those who have engaged directly in dialogue. In **Serbia**, hundreds of judges and prosecutors have publicly denounced executive interference in the context of a protest-related investigation underscoring persistent threats to judicial independence. Even more troubling is the deliberate erosion of legal independence by certain governments. In the **United States**, serious concern has been expressed regarding escalating efforts to target, intimidate, and discredit judges, lawyers, and law firms for fulfilling their professional responsibilities. Such actions undermine the integrity of the legal profession and pose a direct threat to the rule of law. These measures appear retaliatory in nature, targeting legal professionals deemed politically inconvenient through public denigration, threats, and calls for impeachment against judges who have ruled contrary to executive interests. Such actions constitute a direct assault on judicial integrity and undermine the foundations of the rule of law.

In many countries, the **misuse of misinformation and terrorism-related charges** against protesters and human rights defenders has become increasingly prevalent. Lawyers representing such individuals frequently face constraints that undermine fair trial guarantees. Concerns persist over mass trials, excessive reliance on virtual hearings, prolonged pre-trial detention, and restricted access to legal counsel of one's choice. In **Venezuela**, the denial of access to a lawyer of choice and reprisals against legal professionals, including members of *Foro Penal*, in cases linked to electoral protests are particularly troubling. **International standards remain unequivocal** - lawyers must be able to carry out their professional duties without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference. Under no circumstances should lawyers be identified with their clients or their clients' causes.



In several countries, **judicial independence** has come under pressure due to legislative reforms. In **Pakistan, Burkina Faso, and Thailand**, legislative changes affecting appointment procedures and working conditions have raised serious concerns. In **Mexico**, a wide-ranging reform has replaced career judges with popularly elected judges. The process has reportedly been rushed, lacking sufficient public consultation, and has resulted in low voter turnout. The SR urges **Mexico** to enhance the nomination process through the adoption of clear and transparent criteria that guarantee professional competence of candidates. In **Bolivia**, judicial elections were eventually held in December 2024, following significant delays, public protests, and similarly low voter participation. The election of seven magistrates remains pending, five to the Plurinational Constitutional Court and two to the Supreme Court of Justice. International standards consistently emphasize the importance of non-political selection procedures, as they promote appointments based on merit and professional competence. In contrast, popular elections risk politicizing the judiciary and undermining its independence.

Another matter of serious concern is the **continued use of military courts to try civilians**, including protesters and lawyers. Such practices contradict both universal and regional human rights standards, which stipulate that these trials must remain strictly exceptional. Developments in **Pakistan** and **Uganda** are being closely followed, as these norms appear to have been disregarded.

The **protections for justice actors** must extend to the international sphere. The **targeting of International Criminal Court** personnel through threats, intimidation, and retaliatory measures constitutes a violation of human rights and judicial independence. All States are obligated to respect the ICC's institutional independence and to safeguard the safety, impartiality, and autonomy of its officials. At a time when international justice plays an increasingly critical role, attempts to obstruct the work of the Court, its judges, and its Prosecutor are deeply troubling. Such interference not only jeopardizes accountability in specific contexts, including the **occupied Palestinian territory** and **Ukraine**, but also undermines the integrity of the international justice system as a whole. Sanctions and criminal proceedings against ICC judges and prosecutors must be lifted without delay.

Amidst ongoing challenges, a significant milestone has been achieved with the adoption of the **Council of Europe's Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer** - an instrument already welcomed by several States. This Convention marks a critical step in strengthening safeguards for the legal profession, which is essential to the defines of human rights and the rule of law. Commendation is extended to the States that have already ratified it. The Convention responds directly to the rising number of attacks on lawyers worldwide and establishes a clear standard for their protection, enabling the objective assessment of progress and identification of remaining gaps. Drawing to a close, the SR urges all States to consider broad ratification of the Council of Europe's Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer, which remains open to all. Engagement with its protection mechanism is anticipated with interest.



PRESENTATION OF THE COUNTRY VISIT REPORT

The SR presents the key findings from the official country visit to **Chile** carried out from 29 July to 9 August 2024. Commending Chile's achievements in building a justice system recognised for its strong institutions, the SR positively notes that **judges and prosecutors enjoy commendable independence** in their everyday work. However, many Chileans still believe there are two kinds of justice in Chile, one for the rich and one for the poor. Chile has the means and the public will to address this divide.

While being impressed by the professionalism of the *Defensoría Penal Pública*, the SR urges the government to grant it full institutional autonomy to strengthen its role. The judicial academy and innovative institutions such as **environmental tribunals** are recognized for their contributions to Chile's legal system. Ongoing efforts to modernize criminal justice are commendable, and similar reforms to the Civil Procedure Code are encouraged. The progress toward establishing the **National Access to Justice Service**, currently under Senate review, marks a promising step toward addressing deep structural barriers and shortcomings in civil legal aid.

Concerns persist regarding influence peddling in apex court appointments. Therefore, the SR strongly recommends that Chile incorporate the high system of public administration in the preparation of candidate lists and adopt a **merit-based judicial appointment** process guided by clear, objective, and transparent criteria regarding ability, training, and integrity. These reforms are essential to restoring public trust in the judiciary. The need to separate the **administrative and jurisdictional functions** of the Supreme Court remains a key recommendation to enhance judicial independence.

The figure of the *abogados integrantes*, practising lawyers who are placed on a list temporarily and invited to complete quorums, should also be abolished to ensure consistency, impartiality, and professionalism within the judicial system. Of particular concern is the **reduction in judicial funding** under the 2025 budget, which disproportionately impacts rural judges and threatens the accessibility and quality of justice in underserved areas.

Prosecutors and judges investigating serious human rights violations have faced harassment, including through social media. Alarming, such **harassment** has reportedly involved elected officials and political party representatives, raising serious concerns regarding the protection of judicial independence and the rule of law. The **legal profession** in Chile requires enhanced regulation, strengthened ethical standards, improved training, and robust accountability mechanisms. A binding ethical framework for all practicing lawyers is specifically recommended to ensure professional integrity.

The forthcoming report of the **Commission of Peace and Understanding** is positively noted as a potential foundation for meaningful progress. Human rights violations from the Pinochet era, including cases of torture, summary executions, and enforced disappearances remain unresolved. Victims continue to await justice and reparation, families seek the truth about missing loved ones, and society at large awaits closure.



In addressing the challenge of **rising organized crime**, Chile must avoid punitive responses that risk undermining human rights obligations. The continuation of the **state of exception** in the Araucanía and Biobío regions remains a serious concern, for which termination is urged, along with a call for the formal constitutional recognition of **Indigenous land rights**.

Access to justice for migrants and Indigenous peoples also demands urgent attention, as highlighted through specific recommendations. In closing, the SR stresses that Chile must take bold and decisive steps to address the persistent structural challenges within its justice system. Meaningful reform is essential to restore and strengthen public confidence, ensuring the system reflects the principles of fairness and equity that the Chilean people expect and deserve.

FUTURE COUNTRY VISITS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The SR is pleased to report the successful completion of a recent visit to **Guatemala**, where concerns persist regarding judicial independence and the criminalization of legal professionals. Appreciation is extended to the Government of Guatemala for its cooperation and openness throughout the visit. While certain country visits by Special Procedures have been postponed due to the ongoing liquidity crisis, the SR notes with appreciation the acceptance of visit requests by **Poland** and the **Gambia**, and looks forward to confirming dates for upcoming visits to **Zimbabwe** following its official invitation, and to **Tunisia**, which had accepted a visit for 2023.

In closing, Ms. Margaret SATTERTHWAITE reaffirms her availability to all states for **technical assistance and dialogue** aimed at aligning national legislation and practices with international human rights standards. In closing, the SR expresses support for the initiative by the International Association of Judges to designate **11 January as the International Day of Judicial Independence**. The UNGA and member states are warmly encouraged to consider endorsing this important proposal.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Touching upon the issues of Indigenous justice systems, **Ms. Margaret SATTERTHWAITE** seizes the opportunity to highlight three **key points**. First, states must **cease the criminalization of Indigenous authorities** for exercising their legitimate roles within their communities. Reports presented by civil society today confirm that such criminalization continues in various contexts. In particular, the situation in Guatemala is noted with concern, where the Attorney-General has brought charges against several Indigenous authorities. This practice must end.

Second, the **formal recognition of Indigenous peoples and their justice systems** is essential. In this regard, the SR commends Chile's ongoing constitutional efforts to advance recognition and consolidate intercultural legal frameworks. Several states have inquired about how to ensure effective coordination between ordinary justice systems and Indigenous justice systems. In this regard, the SR recalls that Indigenous authorities themselves have consistently expressed a desire for such coordination. They have called for mechanisms that operate on the basis of



equality, allowing for constructive engagement and **harmonization between systems**. Establishing these mechanisms with mutual respect and equal standing is therefore of critical importance.

Turning to the broader scope of the mandate, the SR emphasizes that the protection of the individual rights of judges, lawyers, prosecutors, and community justice workers is not an end in itself. Rather, it is fundamental to safeguarding the rule of law and ensuring equal access to justice for all. The call to uphold the independence of these actors is ultimately a call to protect the human rights of all individuals. In light of the growing **global trend of repression and interference targeting independent justice actors**, the SR urges all states to undertake determined and sustained efforts to reverse this trend and to reaffirm their commitment to judicial independence and the rule of law.

INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE

Views Expressed by the Concerned Country

The delegation of **Chile** expresses its sincere gratitude for the SR's country visit and affirms its appreciation for the content and constructive nature of the report, as well as for the recognition of the progress achieved. The Government highly values the SR's acknowledgment of the strength of the Chilean legal system, the ongoing modernization efforts across the justice sector, and the functioning of key national institutions.

Stressing that this is the **fifth Special Procedures' country visit** during the current Chilean term as a UNHRC member, Chile believes it represents a valuable opportunity to strengthen open, technical, and respectful dialogue with the international human rights system. The Government expresses appreciation for the constructive and good-faith cooperation established between the SR, her team, OHCHR, and various national authorities before, during, and following the visit. The latter took place at a particularly opportune moment, coinciding with Chile's ongoing national discussions on enhancing legal governance and safeguarding judicial independence.

Chile affirms its serious and **constructive reception of the SR's recommendations**, viewing them as a valuable roadmap for strengthening the national justice system. In particular, the **recommendation to separate the administrative and jurisdictional functions** of the higher courts, notably the Supreme Court, is fully acknowledged and supported. In response, concrete steps have already been taken. A few months after the visit, the Government introduced a draft constitutional reform bill aimed at implementing the abovementioned separation and **establishing a Judicial Nomination Council**. While respecting the principle of separation of powers and therefore unable to guarantee the adoption of the bill, the executive has actively fulfilled its co-legislative role, assigned the proposal due urgency and advanced the debate in a substantive manner.

In parallel, the judiciary has implemented a series of initiatives aimed at **narrowing the gap between the justice system and the public**, thereby strengthening citizens' trust. Notably, in the context of the Action Plan for an Open State, the Transparent Judiciary Programme has been launched. This initiative promotes greater access to legal information and services, with a focus on enhancing transparency, collaboration, and public participation.

The SR's report also highlights challenges faced by **Indigenous peoples in their interactions with the criminal justice system**. Chile acknowledges that significant challenges remain in this area, and reaffirms its commitment to addressing them. Significant progress has already been made toward incorporating a respectful and culturally sensitive approach to Indigenous peoples within the Public Prosecutor's Office and other actors in the criminal justice system. This includes the introduction of intercultural facilitators and engagement with Indigenous spiritual leaders to ensure appropriate support for victims.

The SR also notes the **absence of constitutional recognition** of Indigenous peoples as an issue previously raised by other mandate holders and Special Procedures during their visits to Chile. In this context, the delegation announces that on 19 June, the President of the Republic presented to the National Congress a **draft constitutional reform** aimed at advancing the **constitutional recognition of Indigenous peoples** and consolidating the principle of interculturalism. The Government expresses hope for the swift adoption of this legislative initiative.

Reiterating the importance it attaches to the engagement with the international human rights system as a cornerstone of Chile's democratic governance and its commitment to people-centred policies, the Chilean delegation expresses appreciation to the SR for her country visit and for the depth, professionalism, and respect with which she conducts her mandate.

Views Expressed by State Delegations

Afghanistan expresses grave concern over the systemic erosion of judicial independence under Taliban rule. Since August 2020, the rule of law has collapsed, and the Afghanistan Independent Bar Association has been dissolved. Judges, prosecutors, and lawyers, particularly women, have been dismissed, dismantling critical legal safeguards. Legal professionals have been subjected to surveillance, intimidation, arbitrary detention, and extrajudicial killings. The Taliban has imposed a self-interpreted version of sharia without transparency, legal accountability, or consistency. Women legal professionals have been deliberately excluded from the justice system and now live in hiding or exile. These actions constitute a deliberate institutional attack on judicial independence and gender equality. The situation reflects a broader pattern of repression, not isolated incidents. Afghanistan calls on the international community to continue monitoring and to establish protection mechanisms for legal professionals at risk. The statement concludes by urging a renewed global commitment to uphold the rule of law and an independent judiciary.



Albania acknowledges the SR's report highlighting among others the misuse of judicial systems in certain countries to undermine the independence of legal professionals. Judicial independence remains a constitutional and legal guarantee in Albania. Since 2016, Albania has launched a comprehensive reform of the justice sector to enhance its independence, effectiveness, and accountability. This reform has included constitutional amendments, unanimously adopted by Parliament, and the creation of new judicial institutions. The implementation of this legal framework has continued to ensure impartial and independent justice. Tangible results have been observed, particularly in addressing impunity, corruption, and organized crime. Strengthening the rule of law remains a national priority. Albania reaffirms its commitment to further improving its justice system in line with democratic principles. All Member States are urged to protect the independence and integrity of legal professionals. Judicial independence safeguards the rights of all citizens and serves as a foundation for development, stability, and democracy.

Algeria reaffirms its strong support for the SR's mandate on the independence of judges and lawyers, recognizing judicial independence and impartiality as essential pillars of the rule of law and human rights protection. Algeria welcomes the SR's openness to constructive dialogue with states, in line with the Special Procedures' Code of Conduct and marked by the promotion of trust between mandate holders and member states. Algeria underscores the need to distinguish between legitimate representatives of Indigenous peoples and those who misuse Indigenous platforms for political purposes, which undermines the credibility of relevant mechanisms. In closing, Algeria acknowledges the balanced and principled approach the SR has maintained in fulfilling her mandate.

Argentina reaffirms its commitment to the rights of Indigenous Peoples, who enjoy full citizenship and legal equality under national law. The Constitution establishes a republican, federal system based on the separation of powers, with an independent judiciary that guarantees access to justice and the protection of fundamental rights. It has recognized the ethnic and cultural pre-existence of Indigenous Peoples, as reflected in article 75(17) of the Constitution. This recognition ensures non-discriminatory access to justice, supported by culturally and linguistically appropriate mechanisms. Indigenous Peoples hold the same rights and responsibilities as all citizens, under the principle of equality in article 16. The country has upheld its firm commitment to making this equality a lived reality for all.

Armenia refers to ongoing judicial proceedings in Azerbaijan against Armenian prisoners of war, hostages, and detainees, which are described as mock trials marked by serious procedural violations. Armenia states that documented cases of torture have been reported by credible organizations, including Human Rights Watch. The delegation recalls OHCHR's call for the immediate release of all individuals arbitrarily detained in Azerbaijan, including ethnic Armenians. Armenia firmly rejects the allegations made against its nationals and asserts that these accusations rely on manipulated evidence and forced confessions, serving Azerbaijan's political objectives. Armenia stresses that Azerbaijani authorities have used these trials as tools



of political pressure and societal manipulation. Azerbaijan decided to close the ICRC's Office, which has been the only independent body allowed to conduct irregular visits and facilitate communication with Armenian detainees. Armenia concludes that the mistreatment of Armenian prisoners constitutes a clear denial of justice and affirms that accountability remains essential to ending impunity and securing justice for the victims.

Bangladesh reaffirms the fundamental importance of judicial independence as a pillar of the rule of law and human rights protection. This independence remains central to a just and democratic society, ensuring that human rights are enforceable guarantees. The Interim Government, formed after the 2024 student-led uprising, maintains a strong commitment to democratic principles and the rule of law. As part of broader reforms, it has established a Judiciary Reform Commission. The Commission has submitted recommendations addressing independence, transparency, effectiveness, and access to justice. Proposals under review include the creation of a separate secretariat, decentralization, and judiciary expansion. Bangladesh has restored the Supreme Judicial Council to enhance accountability in the higher judiciary. It has also established the Supreme Judicial Appointment Council to ensure merit-based, transparent selection. The Government collaborates with international partners to improve judicial capacity, digitize services, and expand access to justice. Special focus is given to supporting women, youth, and marginalized communities.

Belgium on behalf of a group composed of more than 50 States Parties to the ICC Rome Statute reaffirms that ICC officials and staff must be able to carry out their professional duties free from intimidation. The delegation expresses deep concern regarding the imposition of sanctions on four ICC judges, in addition to previously imposed sanctions on the Prosecutor, and denounces all forms of threats or attacks directed at the Court, its elected officials, personnel, or those cooperating with it. The group firmly rejects any attempt to undermine the judicial independence of the ICC and the integrity of the Rome Statute system. Referring to the 6 June press release issued by the Presidency of the Assembly of States Parties, the group reiterates its unwavering support for the ICC, its officials, and all individuals contributing to the fulfilment of its judicial mandate. Recognizing the ICC as the first and only permanent international criminal court, the group underscores its central role in advancing international justice. The group calls on all states to ensure full cooperation with the ICC, enabling it to fulfil its mandate of delivering justice for victims of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and the crime of aggression offences that pose serious threats to international peace, security, and well-being.

Bolivia acknowledges the inclusive consultation process that has enabled broad participation. The delegation affirms that Indigenous justice systems are inextricably linked to the full exercise of Indigenous rights and are constitutionally recognized as a component of cultural identity. Bolivia has enshrined the parity between ordinary and Indigenous justice systems in its constitutional framework. Since the adoption of the 2010 law, it has regulated the jurisdictional boundaries between these systems to ensure coordination and legal harmony. The country continues to implement mechanisms that promote legal pluralism and inter-system cooperation.



Supporting the report's recommendation to eradicate discrimination that delegitimizes Indigenous legal systems, Bolivia rejects claims according to which Indigenous systems are more likely to violate human rights than ordinary systems. Emphasizing the importance of consistency with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples, Bolivia remains committed to strengthening legal pluralism and protecting Indigenous justice systems as equal and integral components of national law.

Cambodia affirms that Indigenous justice systems are not alternatives to the country's foundational legal order. However, these systems have often been diminished under the drive for legal uniformity. Cambodia stresses that justice requires both institutional design and cultural recognition. The country has demonstrated that justice is most effective when it reflects community values and traditions. Indigenous communities continue to resolve disputes through customary mechanisms rooted in social harmony. These practices follow restorative principles and reflect deep cultural understanding. The Government has issued collective land titles to support indigenous claims. It has also expanded legal aid outreach in remote areas. Multilingual education programs have helped integrate indigenous peoples into the legal system. Cambodia views these efforts as more than symbolic. They represent structural recognition of Indigenous justice as a valid legal order. Cambodia continues to embed these systems within its broader legal framework.

Cameroon commends the SR's report for providing clarity on the challenges Indigenous peoples face in judicial systems. The delegation affirms that customary jurisdictions continue to play a vital role in facilitating access to justice, particularly in rural areas. Cameroon's national legislation and civil codes have recognised the authority of these traditional mechanisms. Cameroon maintains that such jurisdictions are part of a broader pluralist legal system and function in full respect of fundamental rights. These mechanisms contribute to the rule of law and uphold the rights of all parties involved. Nevertheless, persistent challenges remain, particularly those linked to evolving contexts and the need to professionalise traditional justice systems. In this regard, Cameroon welcomes the SR's recommendation to strengthen dialogue between legal systems. It supports the participatory development of coordinated principles between formal and customary justice institutions. The delegation reiterates its commitment to ensuring justice that is both accessible and respectful of diverse identities. Cameroon remains firmly engaged in safeguarding the rule of law within a framework of legal pluralism.

Canada welcomes the SR's report and reaffirms that Indigenous peoples possess the inherent right to maintain and strengthen their own legal systems, as affirmed by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Canada acknowledges that colonial systems have historically marginalized Indigenous legal traditions, contributing to systemic injustices. Respect for and revitalization of these systems is seen as essential to advancing self-determination and equitable access to justice and notes that it has seen success in blending Indigenous and non-Indigenous justice practices and remains committed to enhancing education for justice system actors and expanding support, including funding and infrastructure, for Indigenous-led justice



initiatives. The delegation looks for the SR's views on concrete ways state legal systems can partner with Indigenous Peoples to recognize their authority and support transformative justice reforms grounded in Indigenous knowledge and healing.

China affirms that the protection and development of Indigenous peoples' rights within legal and judicial systems form an important aspect of their broader rights. It emphasizes that the rule of law is the most effective safeguard of human rights. The state is actively advancing the rule of law by building a fair, efficient, and authoritative judiciary aimed at ensuring fairness in every case. Judges and lawyers are recognized as central to this effort. China has enhanced mechanisms to protect judges from interference and has established a four-party consultation mechanism comprising top judicial and legal institutions to support lawyers and promote justice. The Government has kept open reporting channels to address violations of lawyers' procedural rights. In closing, China would like to know from the SR which consensus-based measures the international community can adopt to support Indigenous peoples in maintaining and developing their rights within judicial systems.

Colombia welcomes the SR's report and affirms the importance of coordinated intercultural justice to guarantee rights within diverse legal systems. It expresses concern over recent actions by the Public Prosecutor's Office in Guatemala, noting a pattern of political persecution against individuals involved in combating impunity, including those protected under international instruments. The delegation highlights cases against judges and lawyers investigating serious human rights and humanitarian law violations. Colombia requests the SR to monitor these developments and urges all UN member states to respect immunities and uphold the independence of those acting under international mandates.

Cuba has undertaken comprehensive legal reforms in recent years. These include revisions to the Criminal Code and the Law on Criminal Execution. The reforms result from extensive consultations with legal experts, legislators, and the public. They reflect an increased emphasis on human rights within Cuba's legal system. The judiciary operates independently, and this principle is upheld through the courts. Judges are elected by national assemblies in each territory and are accountable only to the law, as guaranteed by the Constitution. This system enables judges to act free from external pressures or punitive measures. Cuba has prioritized human rights training for members of the judiciary. Reaffirming its commitment to the promotion and protection of all human rights, including civil and political rights, Cuba continues to fulfil its international obligations under ratified legal instruments.

Denmark jointly with the Nordic-Baltic countries reaffirm their commitment to the rights of Indigenous peoples. In the context of the SR's report, the delegation highlights regional examples that reflect efforts to respect and integrate Indigenous legal traditions. In Denmark and Greenland, legislation governing the justice system and the criminal code in Greenland differs from that in Denmark, incorporating foundational elements rooted in traditional Inuit values, particularly those emphasizing resocialization and reintegration. In Finland, the Parliament has



recently approved amendments to the Act on the Sámi Parliament, which strengthen Sámi self-determination. These include the establishment of an Appeals Board to address electoral roll matters concerning the Sámi Parliament. The delegation requests the SR to identify what she considers the most pressing step needed to protect and promote the right of Indigenous peoples to maintain and strengthen their distinct legal institutions.

The **Dominican Republic** praises the SR for her thematic report. While not having an Indigenous population, the Dominican Republic recognises their historical and cultural significance in national development. It further stresses that Indigenous justice systems must be respected as expressions of peoples' right to self-determination, and calls for the integration of these systems within national frameworks where Indigenous communities remain. The Dominican Republic urges states to engage in inclusive dialogue and cooperation with Indigenous peoples to ensure equitable justice representation, and commends the efforts deployed by countries to set in place mixed or plural legal systems. As a supporter of the recognition of diverse legal traditions within a broader rule of law framework, the Dominican Republic further calls for stronger international support to reinforce Indigenous peoples' judicial autonomy. In closing, the delegation raises concern over linguistic barriers that hinder Indigenous access to justice, for which it seeks the SR's guidance in terms of best practices for overcoming such barriers to ensure full participation Indigenous people in legal proceedings.

Ethiopia underscores the report's relevance to inclusive governance and access to justice. The country recognizes the vital role of indigenous and customary justice systems in fostering social cohesion. As a multiethnic federal state, Ethiopia's constitution affirms the rights of nations, nationalities, and peoples to self-determination. This includes the preservation and development of their own legal and customary institutions. The national justice system has incorporated customary and religious mechanisms alongside formal courts. These mechanisms have been particularly effective in resolving family, land, and communal disputes. Rooted in community values, they are often more accessible and trusted by local populations. Ethiopia echoes the report's call for respectful coordination between state and Indigenous systems. It supports capacity-building, legal recognition, and the exchange of good practices. These efforts aim to uphold human rights while respecting cultural autonomy. Ethiopia remains committed to strengthening the rights of its people.

France underscores that judicial independence remains the cornerstone of the rule of law and a pillar of democratic governance. Legal professionals have played a key role in ensuring equal access to justice, in accordance with international obligations. France has consistently prioritised the integrity and autonomy of the judiciary. It continues to implement reforms to enhance judicial efficiency and fairness. In recent years, it has undertaken measures to improve judicial functioning and public trust. The reform of the High Council of the Judiciary has strengthened both its independence and authority. The delegation remains seriously concerned about threats and interference faced by judges and lawyers globally. It commends the recent adoption of the Council of Europe's Convention on the Protection of Lawyers, which represents



a historic step toward safeguarding legal professionals from intimidation. France encourages its promotion and implementation as a safeguard for democratic institutions, and invites the SR to share her views on how the UN can support this important initiative.

The **Gambia** acknowledges the thematic report's emphasis on judicial independence and access to justice for Indigenous Peoples. Although The Gambia does not officially recognize Indigenous populations, it affirms the importance of equal access to justice for all. The country has experienced the consequences of a politicized judiciary under authoritarian rule and recognizes the need to restore public confidence. Since the democratic transition in 2017, The Gambia has undertaken significant reforms to enhance judicial independence, accountability, and gender equality. It has reconstituted the Judicial Service Commission to promote merit-based appointments and operational autonomy. The Government has increased women's representation in high judicial offices and introduced legal education and ethics training. Working conditions for legal professionals have also been improved. The Gambia supports shielding the judiciary from political interference and calls for fair disciplinary procedures. Echoing the SR's appeal to strengthen diversity within judicial systems, the delegation affirms that judicial integrity is vital to sustaining democracy and protecting fundamental rights.

Ghana on behalf of the African group praises the SR's emphasis on the rights of Indigenous Peoples to maintain and develop their own customary justice systems. The African group affirms that this issue holds particular relevance in the African context, where diverse Indigenous communities sustain traditional justice mechanisms grounded in cultural heritage and customary practice. The African group reaffirms that Indigenous peoples in Africa have the right to preserve and strengthen their distinct justice systems, which are vital to their identity, social cohesion, and access to justice. These systems often prioritise restorative justice, community participation, and reconciliation, complementing formal judicial structures. Recognising the coexistence of plural legal systems including customary, religious, and statutory law the group underscores the need for these systems to operate in alignment with human rights principles, particularly equality and non-discrimination. The African group calls on the international community to support efforts aimed at integrating Indigenous justice systems into national legal frameworks while respecting their autonomy and cultural integrity. It emphasises that constructive dialogue between states and Indigenous justice mechanisms is essential to fostering mutual recognition and cooperation. The group encourages the SR to continue engaging with states and Indigenous communities to facilitate the exchange of experiences and the promotion of best practices.

Ghana underlines its Government has placed strong emphasis on modernising the judiciary to enhance efficiency and access. Electronic filing and case management systems have expedited court procedures and reduced delays. Ghana has implemented the 'Justice for All Programme' to address remand case backlogs using digital technology. This initiative includes virtual court settings for remand prisoners, improving the administration of justice. The reforms reflect Ghana's belief that technological innovation is essential for effective legal systems. These



measures have also enhanced access to justice for vulnerable and marginalised communities. Legal and logistical support has become more inclusive and responsive to diverse needs. Ghana continues to promote equitable access to justice by addressing systemic barriers. In closing, Ghana reaffirms support for the SR's mandate in advancing diverse and inclusive legal institutions.

Guatemala welcomes the SR's report and highlights the importance of advancing legal pluralism that respects Indigenous worldviews. The country has implemented measures such as the Indigenous Public Defender's Office, an intercultural legal advice policy, and institutions supporting women's and public defence. The Government notes the SR's recent visit to Guatemala and acknowledges her engagement with justice institutions, civil society, and Indigenous communities. Guatemala reiterates its commitment to judicial independence, transparent selection processes, and constructive dialogue with Special Procedures and Indigenous peoples to build an accessible and rights-compliant justice system.

India stresses that its independent judiciary continues to serve as a foundational pillar of its democratic structure. It has played a vital role in upholding human rights, including economic, social, and cultural rights, through landmark rulings. To improve judicial efficiency and access, the judiciary has implemented a wide range of ICT-based reforms. These include hybrid hearings, digital access to judgments, and translations into regional languages. The Supreme Court has integrated AI and machine learning tools into case management systems. The judiciary also promotes alternative dispute resolution to encourage timely and equitable outcomes. In advancing gender justice, the Supreme Court has issued a handbook aimed at eliminating gender stereotypes. These initiatives reflect India's ongoing commitment to inclusive, transparent, and accountable legal institutions. India remains dedicated to strengthening the rule of law and ensuring justice for all citizens.

Indonesia underscores the importance of an independent judiciary in upholding the rule of law and protecting human rights. In pursuit thereof, Indonesia undertakes significant reforms to strengthen judicial impartiality and professionalism through the ongoing revision of the Criminal Procedure Code. This marks a pivotal step by enhancing the authority of judges within the criminal justice process, empowering them with greater discretion and responsibility to ensure fair trials. Indonesia also expands the role and space for lawyers within the justice system. Recognizing the judiciary's essential function, the President implements a policy to significantly increase the remuneration of judges nationwide, reinforcing judicial welfare and shielding them from external pressures that could undermine impartiality. To ensure access to justice for all, Indonesia has allocated the budget for legal aid, especially for the poor. Indonesia remains committed to engage constructively with the SR to further enhance access to justice for all.

Liechtenstein expresses support for the SR's report and aligns with concerns raised by OHCHR and several UNHRC Special Procedures regarding the imposition of sanctions on the ICC and some of its judges. Liechtenstein affirms that international criminal justice plays a critical role in



holding perpetrators accountable, securing justice for victims and survivors, and deterring future crimes. The delegation warns that undermining criminal justice negatively impacts the rule of law and contributes to global instability and uncertainty. It emphasizes that justice must be upheld impartially and independently, rather than invoked selectively based on political considerations. Sanctions targeting ICC officials are described as attacks on the Court's integrity and as serious threats to the broader system of international justice. It reaffirms its strong commitment to the Rome Statute and ongoing support for the ICC. The delegation calls on all states to express support for the Court's independence and the rule of law.

Lithuania welcomes the SR's report and affirms that the rule of law and judicial independence must be the foundation of every state but notes with concern that these principles have been undermined by states pursuing colonial or neo-colonial agendas. It highlights that since the start of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, Indigenous peoples in Russia have been disproportionately recruited, and Indigenous organizations have been declared extremist, subjected to persecution, and denied access to justice. These repressive measures have extended beyond Russia's borders, targeting NGOs through transnational repression and foreign agent designations. The delegation further notes that Russia has interfered in the judicial independence of other sovereign states, including by refusing to cooperate in cases involving war crimes committed on Lithuanian territory on 13 January 1991. Russia has also initiated criminal proceedings and issued INTERPOL warrants against Lithuanian judges involved in those cases.

Luxembourg acknowledges the progress made by Chile in rebuilding its justice system after dictatorship, with emphasis on democratic foundations. The report highlights key principles, including judicial independence, access to justice, and merit-based appointments. Luxembourg supports the call to uphold the independence of the judiciary and protect the right to a fair trial. It stresses that safeguarding the legal profession is essential to maintaining public trust in the judicial system. The delegation has concluded its presidency of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers. As part of this term, Luxembourg has signed the Convention on the Protection of Lawyers in May 2025. Luxembourg invites all states parties to sign and ratify this convention promptly. It affirms that defending lawyers from threats and intimidation is crucial to uphold the rule of law. The statement also acknowledges persistent challenges to justice systems. It raises concern over access to justice for vulnerable populations. Luxembourg calls for concrete measures to ensure human rights-based justice for migrants, persons with disabilities, and LGBTIQ+ persons.

Malawi, despite not having legally recognized Indigenous peoples, acknowledges the significance of traditional justice mechanisms, particularly in rural areas, where customary systems led by traditional leaders have played a key role in dispute resolution and social cohesion. It recognizes the importance of aligning these systems with the Constitution and international human rights standards, especially in relation to gender equality and access to justice for marginalized groups. The country has remained committed to legal reform, including efforts to harmonize customary and statutory law. Malawi welcomes recommendations on



safeguarding rights within plural justice systems and requests the SR's guidance on how states can support the integration of traditional mechanisms while ensuring full compliance with human rights obligations.

Malaysia expresses appreciation for the thematic report and reaffirms its commitment to protecting Indigenous peoples' rights. It recognises the importance of preserving and developing Indigenous justice systems in line with their customs and traditions. The Federal Constitution and domestic laws place Orang Asli communities in Peninsular Malaysia under the ordinary justice system. Nevertheless, some of these communities have retained traditional dispute-resolution mechanisms such as tribal councils. In Sabah and Sarawak, native courts formally established under state law adjudicate matters of Indigenous custom. This pluralistic structure reflects Malaysia's commitment to legal diversity and cultural respect. The country has promoted coexistence between state and customary legal systems. Acknowledging the need to ensure that all justice mechanisms operate in accordance with international human rights standards, Malaysia continues to enhance inclusive access to justice across all communities. To conclude, it seeks the SR's guidance on harmonising customary justice with national structures.

The **Maldives** welcomes the report's focus on Indigenous justice systems. The delegation supports efforts to uphold Indigenous peoples' rights to maintain and develop legal institutions, thereby emphasizing the importance of aligning these systems with international human rights standards. As a member of the core group on judicial independence, the Maldives reaffirms its support for the SR's mandate. The Constitution affirms for the judiciary's impartiality and independence. Judicial independence is viewed as fundamental to the constitutional order and separation of powers. Efforts have been made to address structural challenges facing the judiciary, alongside support for the judiciary which encompasses strengthening logistics and infrastructure. Vocally affirming that commitment to the rule of law remains central to governance, the Maldives concludes by underscoring their continued engagement with international justice mechanisms.

The **Marshall Islands** praises the SR's report and affirms the right of Indigenous peoples to administer justice based on ancestral laws and customs, in line with international law. As a country whose legal system integrates conventional and customary law, it recognizes that justice is most effective when grounded in the values and realities of local communities. The Marshall Islands highlights the importance of customary approaches to land tenure and land management rights, noting that such practices remain central to Indigenous legal systems. It calls on the international community to uphold Indigenous peoples' jurisdiction over their legal decisions and refrain from criminalizing or suppressing their right to maintain and develop their judicial institutions.

Mexico welcomes the SR's report, which highlights the importance of Indigenous peoples' justice systems as expressions of their right to self-determination and cultural identity. The delegation reaffirms its constitutional recognition of Mexico as a pluri-ethnic and pluricultural



state and upholds the rights of Indigenous peoples to maintain their legal institutions, customs, and languages. It welcomes the report's reference to national practices promoting dialogue and coordination between jurisdictions, ensuring access to justice without discrimination. Mexico emphasizes that judicial independence depends on structural reforms and participatory mechanisms grounded in international law. The delegation calls for strengthening institutional frameworks that ensure integrity, accountability, and public trust in justice systems.

Poland expresses appreciation for the SR's continued efforts to defend judicial independence. The delegation commends the SR's stance on the repression of legal professionals in Belarus, where many have been disbarred, imprisoned, or forced into exile for fulfilling their duties. Judicial independence remains a cornerstone of democratic governance and the rule of law. Poland emphasizes that lawyers must be able to perform their functions free from fear or political interference. At the national level, Poland has pursued reforms to safeguard judicial independence and, at the international level, has signed the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Professional Lawyers. The delegation inquires whether the SR intends to engage with the forthcoming Expert Group under the Council of Europe's framework.

The **Russian Federation** acknowledges the importance of enshrining Indigenous peoples' rights within justice systems. It notes, however, that legal disparities may arise. The delegation affirms that Indigenous peoples in Russia enjoy full constitutional rights equal to all citizens. In accordance with national legislation, Indigenous persons have the right to judicial protection, particularly in relation to their lands and traditional livelihoods. They have participated in legal proceedings and exercised their rights through various courts. Indigenous representatives are also included in relevant judicial bodies.

Sudan outlines the adoption of a national legal framework that supports Indigenous communities through the establishment of independent rural courts. These courts are presided over by community chiefs whose identities are officially recognized. Cases are adjudicated according to local customs, and judges operate under a national code of conduct for magistrates. This framework contributes to conflict prevention and facilitates transitional justice in Sudan's multi-ethnic society. The system is integrated into the national judicial structure and is overseen by the high courts to ensure procedural integrity and justice for all.

Ukraine praises the SR's report and underscores the importance of Indigenous peoples' rights to maintain and develop their justice systems. The delegation highlights the grave situation of the Crimean Tatar people, whose legal and cultural institutions have been systematically dismantled since the Russian Federation's illegal occupation of Crimea. Crimean Tatar leaders, lawyers, and human rights defenders have faced persistent persecution, including arbitrary detention and politically motivated trials. Independent reports confirm that lawyers handling sensitive cases in occupied Crimea have been subjected to intimidation, disbarment, and administrative sanctions, violating the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers. These actions obstruct access to justice and the right to a fair trial. Ukraine calls on the international community to

maintain close monitoring, advocate for the reinstatement of disbarred lawyers, and support independent legal oversight in the occupied territories.

Venezuela affirms that its Constitution recognizes the existence of Indigenous peoples and communities. This recognition includes their social, political, and economic organization, as well as their cultures, languages, religions, customs, and ancestral land rights. The Constitution guarantees their habitat and original rights necessary to sustain their way of life. Venezuela highlights the Organic Law of Indigenous Peoples and Communities, which outlines justice administration in its article 7. The latter affirms the special jurisdiction of Indigenous peoples and its coordination with the ordinary justice system. Venezuela values this dual system as essential for ensuring access to justice that respects indigenous traditions. The delegation invites the SR to recommend further actions to enhance justice access for Indigenous peoples, rooted in their customs and traditions. Additionally, Venezuela requests the SR to address the case of the 253 Venezuelan migrants reportedly held in El Salvador. In closing, Venezuela reaffirms its commitment to protecting the rights of Indigenous peoples and its nationals abroad.

Zimbabwe reaffirms its commitment to judicial independence as outlined in its constitution. The Government has strengthened justice sector reforms since 2024 and has enhanced the judiciary's independence, accessibility, and effectiveness. In 2025, it has reinforced the Judicial Service Commission's autonomy. The Commission continues to operate without external interference. Capacity-building for judicial officers has expanded to uphold rule of law and fairness. Zimbabwe has taken steps to ensure legal practitioners' operational independence. The Legal Practitioners Act is under review with broad stakeholder input. Legal aid access has improved through decentralization and digital court processes. These reforms benefit vulnerable and marginalized groups. Maintaining that an independent judiciary is key to democracy and human rights, Zimbabwe remains committed to justice administered without fear or favour.

Views Expressed by Intergovernmental Organizations

The **European Union (EU)** reiterates its support for the SR's mandate and affirms its commitment to the rule of law and to strengthening an independent and impartial judiciary. The EU reaffirms its strong commitment to promoting, fulfilling, and protecting the rights of Indigenous peoples, as enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and international human rights law, including the principle of free, prior, and informed consent in all decisions affecting them. Acknowledging the importance of legal frameworks that are inclusive, non-discriminatory, and respectful of diversity, the EU emphasizes the need to address discrimination and inequality based on Indigenous origin or identity, particularly in relation to access to justice. The EU further highlights the importance of fair trial guarantees and access to justice for all, including Indigenous peoples, throughout the entire judicial process. The EU recognises the need to eliminate barriers to justice faced by Indigenous peoples, especially women, children, youth, older persons, and persons with disabilities and affirms the critical role of Indigenous peoples in maintaining, developing, and strengthening their own justice systems.



The **International Development Law Organization (IDLO)** welcomes the discussion and affirms its ongoing collaboration with the SR. The IDLO supports legal pluralism and promotes diverse justice pathways, including Indigenous, customary, traditional, and faith-based systems. The Organization draws the Council's attention to its work geared towards the promotion of mediation, alternative dispute resolution, and community para legalism as practical, scalable, and evidence-based approaches to closing the justice gap. The IDLO further notes that the SR's report aligns with its global experience and reinforces priority areas for advancing access to justice. Justice seekers must be legally empowered to benefit from available mechanisms. Women and marginalized groups in non-state systems play a critical role in ensuring fairness and representation. The Organization further stresses the need for an enabling legal and policy framework to promote coordination, accountability, and human rights compliance between state and non-state justice systems. Finally, the IDLO calls on states, international partners, civil society, and the private sector to increase investment in customary and informal justice systems to scale up solutions responsive to local needs.

Views Expressed by National Human Rights Institutions

The **Burundi National Independent Human Rights Commission** states that the Constitution of Burundi guarantees the independence and impartiality of the judiciary from the legislative and executive branches. Judges are bound only by the Constitution and the law in the exercise of their mandate. However, the Commission has observed persistent obstacles affecting judicial independence in practice. These include issues with appointment processes, undue pressures, and external instructions. Such conditions prevent judges from exercising full freedom in their decision-making. Additional barriers to independence remain unaddressed. The law of 24 July 2023, which reforms the legal profession, recognizes the legal profession as independent and liberal. To further promote judicial independence, the Commission urges the Government to align constitutional provisions with those of the Supreme Court. It also calls on the state to allocate sufficient financial resources to ensure the judiciary's budgetary independence. The Commission reaffirms that financial autonomy is a necessary condition for true judicial independence.

Views Expressed by Non-Governmental Organizations

The **Law Council of Australia** jointly with the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI), and Law Asia express deep concern over actions intended to influence or obstruct the functioning of courts. Particular alarm is raised regarding the personal targeting of judges and lawyers for performing professional duties or exercising civil and political rights. Efforts to portray legal professionals as adversaries or threats are firmly rejected. The imposition of retributive sanctions on lawyers and law firms based on the nature of cases or clients is opposed. Misuse of disciplinary proceedings to intimidate or punish lawyers for exercising freedom of expression and association has been observed. Concern is further expressed over attempts to discredit judges, ignore judicial rulings, and diminish judicial authority. Any process to remove a judge must adhere to due process, operate transparently, and comply with established standards of judicial conduct, ensuring the right to a fair hearing. Judicial



independence and accountability must be protected through appropriate safeguards. The Organizations urge the SR to affirm the right of lawyers to freedom of expression and request an investigation into the misuse of sanctions against legal professionals and institutions.

The **Beijing NGO Association for International Exchanges** affirms that in Hong Kong the rule of law remains strong. Hong Kong currently ranks higher than several Western countries, including the United States, in the World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index. Judicial independence in Hong Kong is guaranteed under article 19 of the Basic Law. Legal professionals are respected, and their rights and independence are protected by law. The representative claims that external political interference, particularly sanctions from the United States targeting Hong Kong judges poses the greatest threat to judicial independence. Since the implementation of the National Security Law five years ago, Hong Kong has seen increased stability and competitiveness, now ranking as the world's third most competitive economy. Public safety has reportedly improved, allowing residents to feel secure even late at night. Under the 'one country, two systems' framework, Hong Kong retains the right to elect its representatives and maintain its distinct identity. The representative rejects foreign criticism and invites observers to visit Hong Kong to understand the local situation directly. Emphasizing self-determination, the Beijing NGO Association asserts that the Chinese people control their own destiny and dismisses external human rights critiques.

The **Arab-European Forum for Dialogue and Human Rights** commends the SR's work and emphasizes the need to align such efforts with internationally recognized legal principles. It raises concern over the growing reliance on artificial intelligence (AI) in judicial processes. The use of algorithms to analyse cases and predict crimes is seen as a potential threat to fair trials if not properly regulated. The Forum praises the UAE for its pioneering approach to the ethical use of AI in the justice system. The UAE has adopted both a Pact on the Development and Use of Artificial Intelligence and a Guide on AI Ethics. These frameworks aim to ensure responsible use of technology in legal settings. Smart courts and smart prosecution are examples of tools advancing this vision. Digital tools are being used by legal professionals to strengthen judicial independence. The Forum highlights the importance of ethical innovation to safeguard justice in the digital age.

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada praises the SR for addressing the repression of Chinese human rights lawyers. July 2025 marks ten years since the 709 crackdowns, the largest coordinated attack on legal professionals in China's recent history. On 9 July 2015, over 300 lawyers and legal advocates were targeted by police. Human rights lawyers in China have upheld constitutional rights and obligations under international treaties China has ratified. Since the crackdown, the Chinese government has continued to disbar lawyers and shut down law firms. Many lawyers have received heavy prison sentences for peaceful advocacy. Families of these lawyers have faced harassment, housing loss, restricted access to education, surveillance, and travel bans. Mr. Gao Zhisheng, lawyer, has remained forcibly disappeared since August 2017. The husband of the speaker received a 12-year sentence in 2023 for attending a private gathering. Persecution has also escalated against Tibetans, Uyghurs, Hong Kongers, and other rights defenders. The Chinese Government has extended repression beyond its borders through transnational

targeting. Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada calls on the SR to advise on steps the international community can take to ensure accountability for these widespread abuses.

The **International Federation for Human Rights Leagues (FIDH)** expresses appreciation to the SR for acknowledging ongoing issues in access to justice for Indigenous peoples in Chile and for urging proper resolution of Indigenous claims. Lonco Juan Pichún recalls addressing the UNHRC over a decade ago when his father, also a *lonco*, was unjustly imprisoned under Chile's anti-terrorist law. With support from the international community and a ruling from the Inter-American Court, his father was released and received reparations. Despite this, the family has continued to face criminalization. His brother, Rafael Pichún, community leader, is detained and prosecuted on politically motivated grounds. Broader patterns of criminalization against the Mapuche people persist. Noting that these actions continue despite some legal and institutional progress, Lonco Juan Pichún calls for impartial justice in Chile and respect for Indigenous causes, including land rights. The Federation urges the UNHRC to support measures that uphold Indigenous peoples' dignity and autonomy.

The **Center for Justice and International Law (CIEL)** expresses its support for the SR's report and voices concern over the fact that, despite Guatemala's Indigenous majority, Indigenous law is still regarded as inferior to state legal systems. The justice system continues to treat the application of Indigenous justice as optional. The report is commended for recognizing the criminalization of Indigenous legal practices. Guatemala is reminded of its international obligations to eliminate structural discrimination. The state must clarify legal ambiguities and implement training to ensure respect for Indigenous law. Ongoing criminalization efforts by the Attorney-General are described as alarming. These target individuals who denounce corruption and defend human rights. CIEL denounces the arbitrary detention of Mr. Luis Pacheco and Mr. Héctor Chaclán as a reprisal for their support of democracy during elections. Both are former senior leaders of the 48 Cantons of Totonicapán. CIEL calls on the UNHRC to monitor the 2026 selection processes for the Attorney-General and Constitutional Court. These processes are seen as essential to restoring the legal system and advancing democratic and Indigenous self-determination in Guatemala.

The **Law Association for Asia and the Pacific** jointly with the Law Council of Australia express grave concern over recent judicial actions in the Maldives. On 14 May 2025, the Maldivian Parliament impeached two Supreme Court justices. Reports indicate that the dismissals were carried out without a fair, credible, or impartial process. Serious procedural irregularities and due process violations have been reported. The suspensions violate international standards on fair trial rights and judicial independence. As a result, the Supreme Court has become paralyzed, restricting access to justice and legal remedy. The summary removals occurred despite objections from the Bar Council of Maldives and international legal organizations. These actions have severely undermined public trust in the judiciary. Concerns are raised about threats to the constitutional order in the Maldives. Thanking the SR for continued attention to this matter, the Law Association for Asia and the Pacific calls on the UNHRC to urge the Maldivian Government

to authorize an independent and transparent investigation. A fair and lawful procedure for the removal of judges must be implemented in line with international standards.

The **Centre for Constitutional Rights** raises alarm over a secretive agreement between the United States and El Salvador initiated in March. Under this arrangement, the US has transferred hundreds of migrants to *Cecot* (*Centro de Confinamiento del Terrorismo*, Terrorism Confinement Centre) - a maximum-security prison in El Salvador. Detainees reportedly face torture and abuse without due process. Legal representatives, including the speaker, have been denied access to their clients and any information about their well-being. The agreement is described as an attempt to offshore US migrant detention and evade legal accountability. The Centre draws parallels to past abuses, including extraordinary renditions to Guantanamo Bay. It recalls that few voices condemned such actions at the time, with the Special Rapporteur being a notable exception. Today, similar patterns of abuse are reportedly occurring under authoritarian leadership in both countries. Salvadoran human rights defenders, such as Ruth López of Cristosal, have faced retaliation and detention. The Centre calls for international intervention to annul the agreement and hold the responsible governments accountable. The release of detainees from *Cecot*, Guantanamo, and similar sites is demanded. Reparations are urged for those subjected to forced disappearance and unlawful detention.

The **International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)** jointly with Human Rights Watch, the International Commission of Jurists and other legal organizations, strongly condemn recent attacks on the International Criminal Court (ICC) and oppose sanctions imposed by the United States targeting ICC personnel, cooperating individuals and entities, as well as the designation of the ICC Prosecutor and four judges. The ICC is affirmed as an independent judicial institution and a cornerstone of international justice. Its role is seen as essential to global peace, security, and accountability. Sanctions against ICC officials have weakened the international justice system. These measures threaten the protection of human rights and the rule of law worldwide. The organizations emphasize that such acts obstruct justice and deny victims access to remedies and reparation. They reaffirm that no one is above the law. Victims and those seeking justice deserve unwavering international support. The independence and integrity of the Court must be protected from political interference. The organizations urge the UNHRC to uphold full cooperation with the ICC. Ensuring justice for victims of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and aggression remains the Court's vital mandate.

The **International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)** shares the SR's concern over increasing global attacks on judicial independence. These attacks threaten the rule of law across all regions. In Guatemala, the ICJ supports concerns over misuse of criminal law against justice actors and human rights defenders. The ICJ endorses the creation of an independent evaluation mechanism for the Public Prosecutor's Office. Ahead of Guatemala's 2026 elections, institutions are urged to ensure impartial judicial appointments. In Tunisia, judicial independence has been undermined by politically motivated actions. The Ministry of Justice has transferred 1,000 judges arbitrarily. This has weakened fair trial guarantees. In April 2025, 37 individuals received harsh sentences in a politically charged case. Lawyer Ahmed Swab was later detained for criticizing the



verdict, sees this as part of broader repression against legal professionals. The ICJ asks how to better protect lawyers who defend human rights and the rule of law.

FACTS & FIGURES ON ID PARTICIPATION

38 State Delegations

2 Inter-Governmental Organizations

1 National Human Rights Institution

10 Non-Governmental Organizations