



Law Society  
of Ontario

Barreau  
de l'Ontario

130 Queen Street West  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5H 2N6  
<https://www.lso.ca>

Treasurer's Office  
416-947-3300  
1-800-668-7380  
[treasurer@lso.ca](mailto:treasurer@lso.ca)

October 7, 2021

**Sent by email to: [gov@govonline.cn](mailto:gov@govonline.cn)**

H.E. Xi Jinping  
President of the People's Republic of China  
State Council General Office  
2 Fuyoujie  
Xichengqu  
Beigingshi 10017  
People's Republic of China

**Sent by email to: [ceo@ceo.gov.hk](mailto:ceo@ceo.gov.hk)**

The Honourable Carrie Lam  
Chief Executive of Hong Kong  
Office of the Chief Executive  
1 Tim Wa Avenue  
Tamar, Hong Kong

Your Excellency and Chief Executive Lam:

**Re: Threats to lawyers Jonathan Ross and Selma Masood, and to the Hong Kong Law Society**

I write on behalf of the Law Society of Ontario to voice our grave concern over the threats made to lawyer Jonathan Ross and his family, Selma Masood, and the Hong Kong Law Society. When lawyers, paralegals, judges, and human rights advocates have suffered from fundamental injustices, we advocate for the protection of their rights.

Jonathan Ross and Selma Masood, both lawyers practicing in Hong Kong, were candidates in the Hong Kong Law Society's election this summer. Both had been previously elected in 2017 on platforms in support of the rule of law.

Over the summer in advance of the election, state-controlled Chinese media and candidates with ties to the Chinese government repeatedly threatened the Hong Kong Law Society, claiming that the Law Society risks losing its regulatory authority. This threat was repeated over 30 times in various outlets. The threat carried weight, since two other prominent civil society institutions, the Civil Rights Front and the Union of Professional Teachers, were recently dissolved. Furthermore, these threats were repeated by Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam during her weekly press conference.

On August 21<sup>st</sup>, three days ahead of the election, Jonathan Ross withdrew his candidacy, saying that he had been receiving threats and feared for his safety and the safety of his family. On August 23<sup>rd</sup>, Selma Masood stated that she had also been the target of threats and bullying. The personal threats received by Jonathan Ross and

Selma Masood are a direct result of the statements made by Chief Executive Lam and the state-controlled People's Daily.

On August 24<sup>th</sup>, the five candidates with ties to the Chinese government were elected. Each of those candidates used the threat against the Law Society's regulatory status in their campaigns, stating in their materials and websites that if the other "liberal" candidates were elected, the Law Society would lose its regulatory authority

In light of these circumstances, the Law Society of Ontario urges Your Excellency and Chief Executive Lam to comply with China's obligations under international human rights laws, including the United Nations' *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers*.

Article 16 of the *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers* states:

Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

Article 17 states:

Where the security of lawyers is threatened as a result of discharging their functions, they shall be adequately safeguarded by the authorities.

Article 23 states:

Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the right to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights and to join or form local, national or international organizations and attend their meetings, without suffering professional restrictions by reason of their lawful action or their membership in a lawful organization.

The Law Society of Ontario urges the Governments of China and Hong Kong to:

- a. immediately put an end to all acts of harassment against Jonathan Ross, Selma Masood, and the Hong Kong Law Society;
- b. ensure that all lawyers are free from arbitrary interference in their privacy, family, home, or correspondence, and from attacks upon their honour and reputations;

- c. ensure that all lawyers, paralegals and human rights defenders in Hong Kong can carry out their professional duties and activities without fear of reprisals, physical violence or other human rights violations; and
- d. ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments.

Yours truly,



*\*The Law Society of Ontario is the governing body for more than 55,000 lawyers and 9,000 paralegals in the province of Ontario, Canada. The Treasurer is the head of the Law Society.*

*The mandate of the Law Society is to govern the legal profession in the public interest, and the Law Society has a duty advance the cause of justice and the rule of law.*

copies:

Ambassador Cong Peiwu  
Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Canada  
515 St. Patrick Street Ottawa, Ontario  
K1N 5H3  
[chinaemb\\_ca@mfa.gov.cn](mailto:chinaemb_ca@mfa.gov.cn)

Wang Junfeng  
All China Lawyers Association  
5th Floor, Qinglan Mansion  
No 24 Dongsì Shitiao  
Dongsheng District  
Beijing 100007, China  
[cilec@public.bta.net.cn](mailto:cilec@public.bta.net.cn)

The Honourable Marc Garneau, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Dominic Barton, Canadian Ambassador to the People's Republic of China, The Embassy of Canada to China

Ketty Nivyabandi, Secretary General, Amnesty International Canada

Andrew Anderson, Executive Director, Front Line Defenders

Emma Achili, Head of European Union Office, Front Line Defenders

Kenneth Roth, Executive Director, Human Rights Watch

Albert Ho Chun-yan, Chairperson, China Human Rights Lawyers Concern Group

Sophie de Graaf, Executive Director, Lawyers for Lawyers

David F. Sutherland, Chair, Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

Mary Lawlor, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Diego García-Sayán, Special Rapporteur of the Human Council on the independence of judges and lawyers, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Marina Brilman, International Human Rights Policy Adviser, The Law Society of England and Wales