



Side event CSW70

## Voices from the frontline: women lawyers advancing access to justice

12 March | 18.30 - 20.00 | Permanent Mission of Mexico to the United Nations

UN Plaza 28th Floor, New York

*Participants wishing to attend the side event are kindly requested to register in advance via the following [link](#). Please note that participation is subject to limited capacity and confirmation by the organizers.*

### Background

Women lawyers are essential to ensuring access to justice. In many countries, they are at the forefront of cases involving women's rights, gender-based violence, or sexual and reproductive rights.<sup>1</sup> Yet, this important work often comes at a great professional and personal cost.<sup>2</sup>

Lawyers around the world face serious challenges -including intimidation, harassment, and even lethal risks- simply for doing their work. Women lawyers, however, experience an additional layer of risk. They are disproportionately targeted through sexist smear campaigns, stigmatization, online and offline harassment, threats, and gender-based violence. Such attacks frequently rely on entrenched gender stereotypes designed to undermine their credibility and legitimacy as legal professionals. Notably, women lawyers who apply gender-sensitive, survivor-centred, or intersectional approaches often exposed to reprisals, public attacks, political pressure, or disciplinary actions. These measures create a chilling effect, discouraging the use of legal strategies that are essential to achieving substantive equality and ensuring effective access.

These risks do not exist on their own; they are intensified by the structural inequalities embedded within the legal profession. The UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers (SRIJL) has stressed the negative impacts of gender stereotypes, the underrepresentation of women and the urgent need to integrate a gender perspective in all aspects of the justice system.<sup>3</sup> Despite progress in gender representation within the legal profession in many countries over the past decades, systemic inequalities persist, hindering women's entry into the profession, limiting career progression, and contributing to the gender gap in senior and leadership positions. Many women lawyers also report being treated differently by courts and institutions, facing subtle or overt bias that affects their work, career trajectory, and their clients' access to justice.

Together, the differentiated risks women lawyers face and the systemic inequalities create "double barrier" in their pursuit of justice. In addition to the well-documented obstacles faced by women and girls in accessing justice, women lawyers themselves must navigate discrimination, insecurity, and professional marginalization—further undermining the effectiveness, independence, and inclusiveness of justice systems as a whole.

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<sup>1</sup> SRIJL & Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan, [Joint Statement](#), 20 January 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Lawyers for Lawyers, [Nursyahbani Katjasungkana: "we as lawyers need to learn more about gender and law"](#), 8 March 2023.

<sup>3</sup> SRIJL, interim report, 10 August 2011, [A/66/289](#).



## CSW70

The next session of the [Commission on the Status of Women](#) (CSW 70) to be held in March 2026, will bring together heads of state and government, civil society organisations, representatives of feminist and women's movements and international agencies to address the priority theme:

*“ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls, including by promoting inclusive and equitable legal systems, eliminating discriminatory laws, policies, and practices, and addressing structural barriers.”*

Women lawyers are indispensable actors in advancing this priority theme. It is therefore essential to explicitly address the critical role lawyers play in ensuring access to justice for women and girls, the gender-specific risks and barriers faced by women lawyers, and the urgent need to protect and support them. Without such protection, access to justice for women and girls remains incomplete and fragile.

## Objectives

Against this backdrop, the side event aims to:

- **Raise awareness** of the unique barriers and systemic discrimination that limit women lawyers' participation, influence, and ability to practice safely and independently.
- **Amplify voices** by providing a platform for women lawyers to share experiences, insights, and strategies to ensure gender equity and protect their professional rights.
- **Foster collaboration and partnerships** between governments, bar associations, civil society, and international bodies to advance institutional reforms in courts, law firms, and legal institutions.
- **Promote accountability** by calling on states, bar associations, and international bodies to prevent discrimination, harassment, violence, and retaliation against women lawyers, while advancing gender equity in the legal profession.

## Tentative Programme

- **Welcome and opening remarks**
  - Gabriela Guadalupe Madero Jiménez – Permanent Mission of Mexico to the United Nations
- **Panel Discussion:**
  - Shabnam Moinipour - Centre for Supporters of Human Rights (CSHR)
  - Flor de María Gálvez – Lawyer and former representative at the *Comisión Internacional contra la Impunidad en Guatemala* (CICIG)
  - Khrystyna Kit - Ukrainian Women Lawyers Association “Jurferm”
  - Paulette Brown - American Bar Association (ABA)
- **Interactive Q&A session** – Exchange with participants
- **Closing Remarks by the moderator** – Reflections and key takeaways

**Moderator:** Natalia Segura Diez – Lawyers for Lawyers