



International League Against Arbitrary Detention

Launch Report - February 2024



About

The International League Against Arbitrary Detention (ILAAD) was established on 28 September 2023 as an independent NGO under French Law based in Paris.

ILAAD's vision is of a world where no one is arbitrarily detained and where everyone can freely enjoy their fundamental rights, in accordance with international human rights instruments. Guided by the principles of international solidarity and the universality of human rights, ILAAD's mission is to carry out research and action aimed at preventing and putting an end to arbitrary detention, adopting a national and global scope of action.

ILAAD's fight against arbitrary detention is conducted in France and abroad, by volunteer activists who are the essential links of its actions, in the name of promoting and protecting the rights and freedoms protected by international human rights law, set out in particular in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

This launch report outlines ILAAD's achievements in the first 6 months since its official launch and will serve as a template for future annual reports paving the way towards more common actions committed to advancing the rights of people arbitrarily detained.

***“Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person.
No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention.”***

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights - Article 9

Mission

Arbitrary detention is a pressing global issue that continues to violate fundamental human rights, undermining the principles of justice, freedom, and dignity. This illegal practice is pervasive across the globe and affects a diverse range of people, including political activists, journalists, human rights defenders, and minorities.

The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) plays a crucial role in addressing and combating this global challenge. Established by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in 1991, the WGAD operates as a thematic special procedure within the framework of the UN Human Rights Council. Its mandate allows the group to examine individual cases, as well as broader systemic issues contributing to arbitrary detention. The WGAD seeks to bring attention to cases of concern, engage with governments to address violations, and provide recommendations to prevent future instances of arbitrary detention.

However, the effectiveness of the WGAD is contingent on the cooperation of Member States and their commitment to upholding human rights standards. In that regard, advocacy for the prevention and elimination of arbitrary detention requires a concerted effort by the international community, civil society, and governmental bodies to ensure that WGAD recommendations are implemented and that those responsible for arbitrary detention are held accountable. That is the reasoning behind the creation of ILAAD and its activities.



Through its activities, ILAAD's mission is to strengthen global efforts to end arbitrary detention.

Structure

ILAAD's activities are conducted by volunteer activists, lawyers and researchers committed to advancing the rights of people arbitrarily detained. As of February 19, 2024, these were carried out by 8 active members assisted by 8 non-member student volunteers enrolled in our Human Rights Volunteers Program (HRVP).



Our litigation team provides free legal support to the victims of arbitrary detention and to NGOs and lawyers defending them in submitting complaints to the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention calling for the immediate release of victims of arbitrary detention.

Our research team scrutinizes arbitrary detention cases globally, drafts articles on the opinions and reports of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and conducts systematic research into cases of individual or mass arbitrary detention.



Our advocacy team alerts the public and the media of arbitrary detention situations through ILAAD's website, informs our members and donors through a newsletter illustrating our collective impact, and identifies advocacy and litigation partnerships opportunities to defend the rights of arbitrary detention victims.

First Joint Complaint to the United Nations

In December 2023, jointly with the Russian independent human rights defense and media group OVD-Info, ILAAD submitted a [complaint to UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention on behalf of 4 political prisoners](#), namely Dmitry Ivanov, Andrey Balin, Igor Baryshnikov and Alexander Bakhtin, against Russia.

Dmitry Ivanov : student activist and creator of the Telegram channel «Moscow State University is protesting» **sentenced to serve 8 years 6 months of imprisonment for anti-war messages on Telegram.**

Andrey Balin : former member of the People's Freedom Party from Tolyatti **sentenced to 7 years in prison for anti-war posts on VKontakte.**

Igor Baryshnikov : activist from Kaliningrad **sentenced to 7.5 years in prison for posts on Facebook.**

Alexander Bakhtin : eco-activist **sentenced to 6 years in prison for posts on VKontakte.**

Since the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the Russian Federation has widely used established and new repressive laws on spreading «knowingly false information» about the Russian army to combat anti-war dissent. In this context, within an effort to silence anti-war voices in Russia, **Dmitry Ivanov, Andrey Balin, Igor Baryshnikov and Alexander Bakhtin, were all arrested, detained and sentenced under Art. 207.3 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, after they shared anti-war statements on the Internet.**

Our litigation team alongside the lawyers of OVD-Info asked the Working Group on behalf of the four victims to recognize that their arrest and deprivation of liberty were arbitrary and to **urge Russia to release them immediately**, as well as to bring the relevant national legislation in line with its obligations under international human rights law, by **repealing Article 207.3 of the Russian Criminal Code** and exonerating sentences under this legislation.

Current Research

ILAAD conducts thematic research into cases of individual or mass arbitrary detention by identifying, analyzing and systemizing the case law of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention in order to monitor systemic discriminatory mass arbitrary detention practices by States. In February 2024, we began a partnership to that end with Aix Global Justice, the Law School's doctoral clinic of Aix-en-Provence on international human rights law.

ILAAD's research is to be published on our website and updated every year to create a database to track harmful State practices, as well as to be sent annually to the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention to help the 5 independent experts appointed by the Human Rights Council in their mandate.

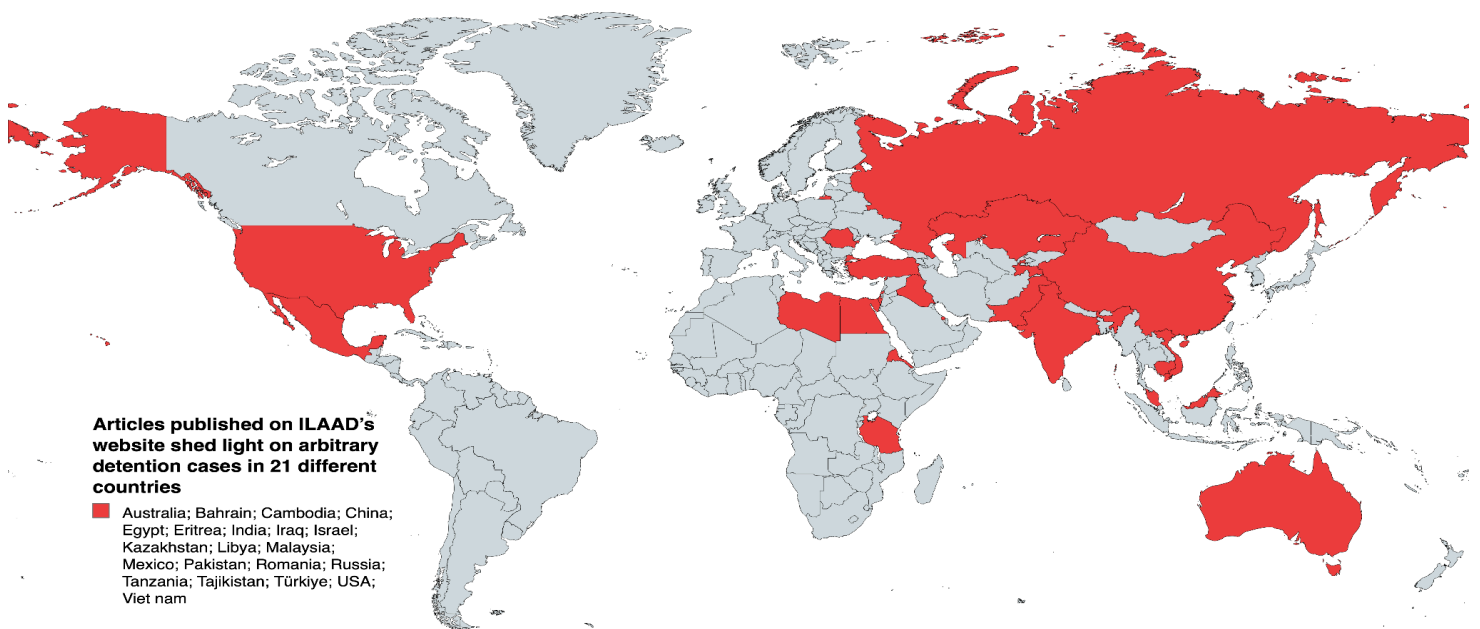
Our research team is currently conducting in-depth research on **three systemic arbitrary detention situations** :

- Arbitrary detention and fake news law
- Arbitrary detention of human rights environmental activists
- Arbitrary detention of women

By offering expert insights, legal commentary, and contextual background on the broader systemic issues contributing to arbitrary detention, we aim to contribute to the overall understanding of this human rights violation. Through meticulous research and collaboration with other organizations, our publications will not only bring attention to the urgency of individual cases but also serve as a catalyst for informed discourse, policy reform, and international cooperation in the collective endeavor to eliminate arbitrary detention.

Media Presence

ILAAD's website was officially launched at the end of 2023, in English - www.ilaad.org - quickly followed in January 2024 by a French version - www.ilaad.org/fr - a Spanish version of the site will follow soon. ILAAD is also present on [LinkedIn](#), which together with our website, plays a pivotal role in our growth by facilitating recruitment and engagement. Hence, our online presence serves both as a **crucial avenue for victims** of arbitrary detention and their representatives, as well as as a **valuable resource hub** for defense teams and advocacy groups offering comprehensive insights into legal precedents and best practices for addressing arbitrary detention.



ILAAD published 30 articles in English and 13 articles in French on its website related to WGAD opinions in which the Working Group recognized the arbitrary nature of the detention at stake. Through analytical summaries of WGAD opinions, these publications look to draw attention to the prevalence of arbitrary detention, advocate for justice by urging States to take all the necessary measures to implement the recommendations in the WGAD opinions, and empower civil society, policymakers, and concerned individuals with the knowledge needed to advocate for systemic change and the protection of human rights.

Approach to Technology

At ILAAD, we are convinced that the future of human rights monitoring and efficient pro bono legal support at the United Nations lies in the development of digital solutions facilitating the collection of human rights violations around the globe.

With our partner Neota Logic and the support of students from Cornell Law School and Cornell Tech, we are developing an expert digital system to assist lawyers, NGOs, victims and family members of arbitrary detention victims in submitting complaints to the United Nations WGAD that will :

- facilitate the collection of human rights violations related to arbitrary detention;
- accelerate the process of submitting cases to the United Nations to react swiftly to urgent situations;
- help leverage and collate data on widespread and mass human rights violations.



Based on the Model Questionnaire of the United Nations WGAD, this digital form which will be accessible on our website. The form will ask a series of questions to process information about the reported detention and generate a report with a preliminary assessment on whether the documented situation may qualify as one of the 5 categories of arbitrary detention recognized by the Working Group. The user will have the possibility to download the generated situational report and have it mailed to them. It will also be automatically sent to our team of pro bono lawyers and researchers in international law so that they can review it before contacting the user to discuss the opportunity to submit a complaint to the WGAD.

All information provided in the generated report is a preliminary assessment which does not constitute legal advice. It is intended for informational purposes as well as for ILAAD's team of pro bono lawyers and researchers to consider if the situation merits further consideration at the United Nations level. All information collected by this form would remain confidential.

Human Rights Student Volunteer Program

Another of ILAAD's objectives is to participate in educating young people to the international protection of human rights. ILAAD does so through its Human Rights Student Volunteer Program which offers opportunities for recent undergraduate and graduate students to learn more about the international human rights protection mechanisms against arbitrary detention and gain hands-on experience by making practical contributions towards the protection of victims of arbitrary detention.



**Volunteers from
France, Spain, Italy
and Uganda**

Selected student participants join the program remotely and become non-members volunteers of ILAAD. They are formed to monitor, research and analyze wrongful detention practices to assist our active members of lawyers and researchers to provide timely, accurate and expert legal and advocacy support. In this fashion, our student volunteers take part to ILAAD's campaign and research to advance human rights' promotion, by dedicating around 10 hours per week, during 3 months. Our HRSVP constitutes one of the main ways we form and recruit our future active members.

Executive Bureau

Our activities are directed by the Executive Bureau, constituted of the three founding members of ILAAD, vested with the powers to approve the strategy to achieve the organization's missions, to administer the association and ensure its proper management, as well as to supervise the actions of its members.

**Mael Clerc,
President**



Mael is the President of ILAAD. Based in Paris, Mael has extensive experience working on arbitrary detention cases as a legal expert in law firms, and is currently writing a PhD thesis on “Arbitrary Detention and International Law” at the Sorbonne Law School.

**Malo Denouel,
VP & Secretary-general**



Malo is a Vice-President of ILAAD, in charge of international relations for the organization. Based in Brussels, Malo is an expert in European affairs and has experience in legal, policy, and advocacy work at the United Nations, the European Union, and as an independent consultant.

**Thibault Cadet,
VP & Treasurer**



Thibault is a Vice-President of ILAAD, in charge of public affairs for driving the organization's strategy with national institutions to seek political and financial support. As a lawyer at the Paris Bar, Thibault is also coordinating our litigation team of pro bono lawyers and researchers.

Our Partners & Donors

Although ILAAD was officially established in September 2023, in the span of a few months, the team has already managed to achieve great progress which could not have been reached without the early trust from our first partners, donors and members.



OVD-Info is an independent human rights defense and media group. They work on the ground in Russia and globally aim at putting an end to political persecution in Russia. Together we submitted a [complaint to UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention on behalf of 4 political prisoners](#), against Russia.



Neota Logic is a leading no-code platform empowering us to deliver access to our expertise at scale through the development of our future [digital Arbitrary Detention Form](#). Moreover, this project would not have been possible without the support of professors and students of Cornell Law School and Cornell Tech.



Aix Global Justice is Aix-en-Provence Law School's doctoral clinic on international human rights law with the mission to promote and defend international human rights law. Together we are leading research into systemic practices of arbitrary detention.

Last but not least, our donors and members provided us with crucial financial support from the very first days of the organization, and thanks to them, ILAAD will continue to grow and expand its action to address arbitrary detention globally.

Thank you

The Way Forward

In the upcoming year, ILAAD is poised to pursue its multifaceted approach in addressing the pressing issue of arbitrary detention globally.

Central to our mission is the continued filing of new complaints with the WGAD, aiming to bring attention to and challenge cases of arbitrary detention across the world. By leveraging our legal expertise and collaborating with NGOs helping people arbitrarily detained and their representatives, we will carry on shedding light on instances of human rights violations and contribute to the Working Group's efforts in promoting universal international standards of protection.

ILAAD will persist in strengthening existing partnerships and cultivating new alliances with organizations actively engaged in combating arbitrary detention across the globe. By fostering collaborations, we aim to amplify our impact, share resources, and collectively address the systemic challenges contributing to arbitrary detention. These partnerships will enable us to offer our support to a broader range of individuals and contribute to a coordinated global response.

As part of our commitment to knowledge dissemination, ILAAD will continue to publish insightful articles on recent WGAD opinions and thematic research reports that illuminate specific legal challenges within the realm of systemic arbitrary detention practices. To expand our impact and reach, ILAAD will also actively pursue the growth of our organization by recruiting new members and volunteers.

Through collective efforts and a growing community of supporters, together, we will persevere in making a significant contribution to the global movement for justice and human rights.

Mael CLERC
President



Malo DENOUEL
VP



Thibault CADET
VP

