



Constitution Protection Bureau  
of the Republic of Latvia

Public Report

## **RUSSIA INTENSIFIES LAWFARE AGAINST THE WEST TO JUSTIFY MORE AGGRESSIVE ACTIVITIES**

June 2026

## MAIN POINTS



Over the last year, Russian institutions have updated their plans and tasks for carrying out lawfare – the abuse of the legal system, laws, norms and legal proceedings – on a large scale at the international level, in order to weaken and influence the West.

Russia's plans include carrying out direct legal pressure on Western political leaders and officials to prevent them from adopting anti-Russian policy, as well as suing Western countries in international courts.

Russia seeks to develop deeper cooperation with Russia-friendly or neutral countries by forming a joint legal position against the West. In particular, Russia learns from the Iranian experience in its lawsuits against the West.

Russia plans to sue the Baltic states in the UN International Court of Justice, and Russia can use this to intensify its aggressive activities or as pretext for a potential direct confrontation against the Baltic states.

**Lawfare** – the use of legal mechanisms, abuse of laws and other legal norms in order to weaken, discredit and put pressure on other countries or to reach other political, economic or military goals.

## RUSSIA UPDATES ITS PLANS AND TASKS IN LAWFARE

SAB intelligence indicates that, over the last year, Russian institutions have evaluated and updated their plans and tasks on how to use different legal instruments and mechanisms in Russia's interests, especially within international organizations. Although the use of lawfare is not a new trend in Russia's toolkit, until now it has mostly

been used to target Ukraine. According to SAB intelligence, Russian institutions seek to carry out lawfare against the West specifically, because Russia assesses that the legal arena is one of the directions within which active and direct confrontation with Western countries is already taking place.



# RUSSIAN INSTITUTIONS' CURRENT LAWFARE PLANS



## Improving the capacity to conduct lawfare

Education programs for the training of new arbitrators and law specialists in Russia and Russia-friendly countries

Increase in personnel involved in lawfare

Centralized approach for the monitoring, organizing and carrying out of international legal proceedings agenda



## Strengthening cooperation with countries friendly or neutral to Russia

Efforts to explain Russia's position and persuade others, with the aim of gaining quantitative support for Russia's initiatives and critique of Western initiatives

Agreed positions and dialogue with BRICS, SCO, CIS countries

Joint lawfare activities with Russia's allies, such as Belarus



## Increasing pressure against Western countries

Use of legal instruments against officials responsible for the introduction and implementation of sanctions

Open and direct threats against foreign countries and their officials in response to legal activities against Russia

Legal proceedings against Western countries in international courts and arbitration

Propaganda activities, using international court decisions favorable to Russia

Monitoring violations of human rights and democratic principles in Western countries, especially with regard to Russian compatriots and diaspora

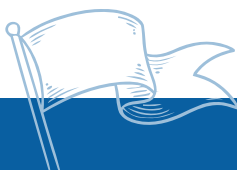
## Strengthening Russia's influence in international courts



Establishing a register of Russia-friendly international and foreign judges

Increased exchange of experience, practice and cooperation between Russian judges and Russia-friendly international and foreign judges

Promotion of Russian judges in international courts



## Weakening the international legal system

Discrediting the International Criminal Court, its activities and judges

Developing new alternative international arbitration mechanisms

Countering initiatives aimed at punishing Russia's crimes in Ukraine

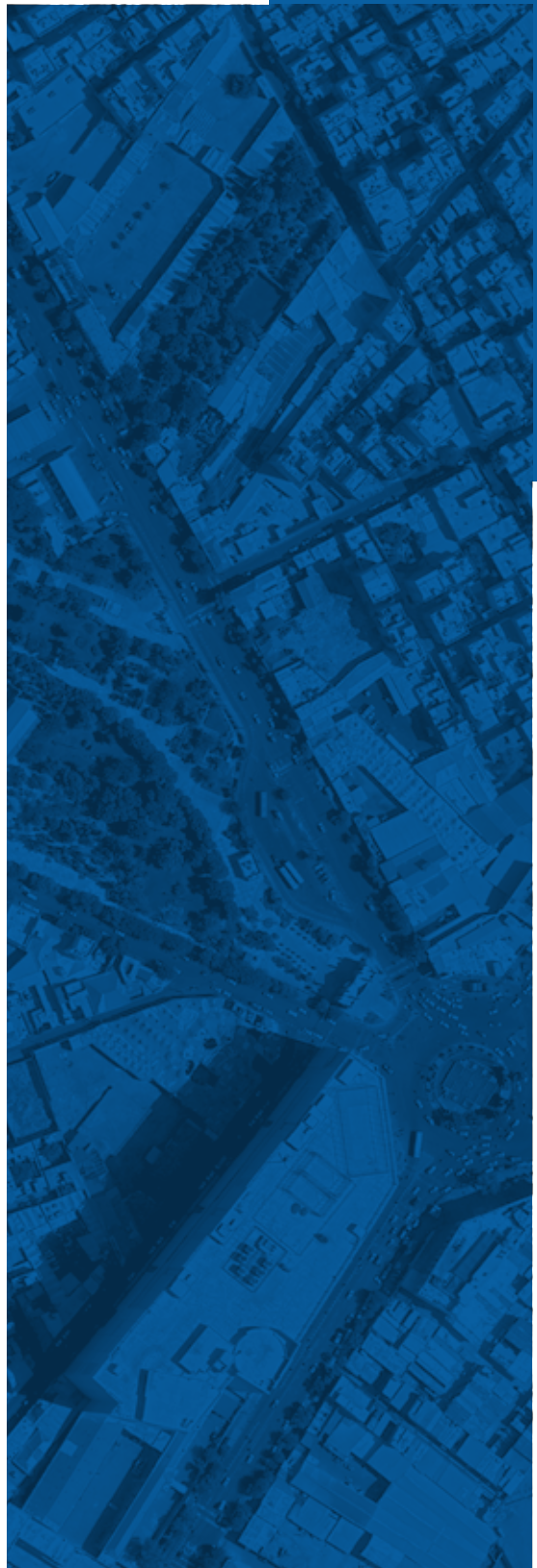
## RUSSIA TRIES TO ADOPT “BEST PRACTICES” FROM IRAN

SAB intelligence indicates that Russian officials assess Iran to be a country from which it can learn how to effectively carry out lawfare against the West. Therefore, Russia closely analyzes precedents and legal practices in various Iranian disputes with the West. The goal – to adapt Iranian practice in Russia’s activities against Western countries in the international arena and to improve inner organizational work of Russian institutions, while planning and carrying out lawfare.

SAB is aware that Russian experts have analyzed Iran’s 2016 claim in the UN International Court of Justice against the US and respective court rulings on US sanctions and frozen Iranian financial assets. While analyzing the proceedings, Russian experts paid close attention to the court’s ruling that in certain cases the bilateral agreement signed between Iran and US allegedly was violated because of the US actions. Therefore, experts concluded that sanctions can be considered baseless if there are bilateral agreements signed between the respective countries in other cases as well.

In the assessment of Russian experts, Russia can use the Iranian-US case as precedent. Therefore, Russia almost certainly is considering the possibility of submitting legal claims on sanctions-related issues as well, and is planning the best tactic to use in the pretrial stage. Russian experts are appealing to countries that, similar to Russia, are subject to restrictions, to carry out joint counter-measures, including establishing a mechanism that would hold those responsible for the introduction of restrictions accountable.

According to SAB intelligence, Russia also wants to adopt the Iranian practices in regards to the organization of lawfare. More precisely, in Russia’s assessment, it would be necessary to create a joint and centralized information centre, the work of which would be based on a similar institution operating in Iran.



## RUSSIA MAY USE LEGAL CLAIMS AS A PRETEXT OR JUSTIFICATION FOR AGGRESSION AGAINST NATO

SAB intelligence confirms that the Russian regime's threat perception continues to grow. According to the regime's perception, a direct confrontation is already taking place between Russia and the West in all domains, including the legal sphere. Therefore, it is almost certain that Russia's activities – complaints against the West in international courts, information influenced operations and campaigns, attempts to break down international organizations unfavorable to Russia – will become more frequent and aggressive.

By constantly trying to intimidate the West by applying legal pressure, Russia aims to push policy favorable to Russia, such as the easing of sanctions. If Russia convinces enough countries that they should follow its position, there is a risk that its aggression against Ukraine and potentially other countries could become justified at the international level. Finally – Russia can use legal arguments as pretext and justification for intensified aggressive activities or a potential confrontation against NATO.



Already now, Russia is intensifying the lawfare, increasingly focusing on psychological influence activities. For example, at the end of May 2026, Vladimir Putin signed a law, authorizing himself to make a decision on sending Russian Armed forces to foreign countries to protect Russian citizens. The law states that it is permissible to send the army abroad if Russian citizens are subjected to legal proceedings. The main goal of the law almost certainly is to intimidate Western countries and their officials as well as to prevent them from introducing further restrictions against Russia and Russian citizens abroad. In particular, Russia is worried about the International Criminal Court's arrest orders, the Special Tribunal for investigating Russia's crimes of aggression against Ukraine.

## RUSSIA SUES BALTIC STATES IN UN INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

One of the practical ways in which Russia is trying to put pressure on Western countries, is by submitting complaints against them in international courts. The Baltic states are not an exception. Russia plans to sue the Baltic states in the UN International Court of Justice, formally using the discrimination of Russians and Russian-speakers living in the respective countries as the justification. According to SAB intelligence, Russia has prepared the complaint and is currently preparing to file the case in court. In the complaint, Russia uses a highly manipulative approach, by selectively interpreting international norms and adapting them to imagined evidence while accusing the Baltic states of alleged violations of UN International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD).

According to SAB intelligence, Russian officials believe that the UN International Court of Justice is favorable to Russia, therefore, Russia likely assesses that it could win in the legal proceedings. Irrespective of the possible ruling of the case, in

Russia's assessment, the submission of the application would already be serving a purpose. It would allow propaganda narratives about the Baltic states and their discreditation to spread as widely as possible, especially if it becomes part of the agenda of international courts.

Although statements regarding violations of the rights of the Russian-speaking part of society are constantly used in Russian propaganda and officials' rhetoric, such a complaint would mark a significant change in the approach towards the Baltic states – namely, propaganda would become the foundation for practical action. Russia's maximal goal is to put international pressure on the Baltic states to change their policy towards it. Russia uses such legal arguments on a regular basis to justify its aggression – the war in Ukraine was presented as the protection of Donbas residents as well. Therefore, if deemed necessary, Russia can use the complaints against the Baltic states as pretext for more aggressive activities.





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the West to justify more aggressive  
activities

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