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UN Human Rights Council
Thirty-Fourth Session
27 February – 24 March 2017

Item 2 – Interactive Dialogue on the High Commissioner’s Report on Sri Lanka
Amnesty International’s oral statement to the 34th session of the UN Human Rights Council
(27 February-24 March 2017)

Mr. President,

Amnesty International welcomes Sri Lanka’s cooperation and engagement with the UN system. Since 2015 it has issued a standing invitation to Special Procedures and facilitated five country visits, including a long awaited visit by the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearance in November 2015. We encourage the government to continue to engage with the Special Procedures, and in particular, to facilitate the requested follow-up visit of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence.

Sri Lanka has made limited progress, however, in meeting commitments made in Resolution 30/1 to establish new mechanisms to deliver truth, justice and reparation to victims of crimes under international law, and institute reforms to guarantee non-recurrence. The government showed little support for public consultations during the design of these mechanisms and did not effectively communicate information about the process to the public. It has not identified a clear strategy for addressing the consultation findings

Impunity persists in emblematic cases included in the High Commissioner’s report, such as the killing of 5 students in Trincomalee in January 2006, 17 Action Contre la Faim humanitarian workers in Muttur in August 2006, and the disappearance of political cartoonist Prageeth Ekneligoda in January 2010. Amnesty International supports the High Commissioner’s call for international participation in accountability mechanisms to ensure their “independence, credibility and impartiality.”¹

Sri Lanka continues to hold detainees arbitrarily and without charge. Torture persists in police stations across the country. Police have failed to comply with Presidential Directives, issued in June 2016, aimed at protecting the rights of detainees under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). Proposed changes to the Criminal Procedure Code seek to limit access to counsel until police have recorded a statement, denying vital protection against abuse.

Amnesty International reiterates its call for Sri Lanka to repeal the PTA and ensure that any replacement legislation contains strong safeguards against abuse.

¹Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on Sri Lanka, 10 February 2017A/HRC/34/20, p. 10 para 42