

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

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Sri Lanka: Commission of Inquiry must be independent and international

Amnesty International welcomes the announcement by the Government of Sri Lanka on 4 September 2006 to invite an international independent Commission to inquire into abductions, enforced disappearances and unlawful killings in all areas of the country. If implemented effectively such a Commission could be an important step towards ending impunity for serious past human rights abuses in Sri Lanka. The organisation takes the opportunity of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva to emphasise the importance of the establishment of an *independent* Commission with the means and the credibility to conduct effective investigations, obtain relevant testimony and information from witnesses, and gain the acceptance of its recommendations by all relevant parties.

Members of the body conducting the inquiry should be drawn from international experts, chosen for their impartiality, integrity and competence, and should be independent, and be seen to be independent, of any institution, agency or individual that may be the subject of, or otherwise involved in, the inquiry. In order to help ensure the credibility and independence of the Commission of Inquiry its members should be chosen in consultation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and Sri Lankans as well as international civil society. The mandate of the Commission must be well-defined. The Commission should be mandated to fully investigate the most serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law whether by government forces, LTTE, Karuna Group or any other armed group or individuals operating on their behalf.

Amnesty International believes that the establishment of an international independent Commission of Inquiry is potentially an important step in addressing impunity for past abuses, which could help to reduce the current escalating violence in the country. However, the organisation notes that it will not replace the urgent need for effective and on-going measures to protect the civilian population, including an international monitoring presence which it hopes the government will fully support.