



AI Index Number: IOR 40/4695/2021
14 September 2021

-Check against delivery-

ORAL STATEMENT
Item 2: General Debate

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL UPDATES ON HUMAN RIGHTS CRISES IN AFGHANISTAN, SRI LANKA AND NICARAGUA

UN Human Rights Council
Forty-eighth regular session
13 September – 8 October 2021

Madam President.

We thank the High Commissioner for her update on the dire human rights and humanitarian crisis in **Afghanistan**. Since we addressed this Council three weeks ago, the Taliban has continued door-to-door searches for human rights defenders, journalists and women activists. Thousands that were prevented from leaving the country on evacuation flights remain in hiding, as reports emerge of [killings of former police officers](#), beatings, torture and other acts of reprisals. Women marching peacefully to demand the respect of their rights have been [met with violence](#) as the Taliban has shot into the air, beat them and used tear gas and pepper spray. As noted in our [recent research output](#), information on the situation of human rights defenders, journalists and women activists, particularly in the provinces, has been severely restricted as the Taliban have cut mobile phone services in many areas. We urge this Council to move from handwringing to action, and mandate a much-needed independent investigative mechanism on Afghanistan without further delay this session. We further urge all states to respect and protect the rights of those seeking to leave the country, and claim their right to asylum, including by increasing pathways to protection and immediately halting all push-backs and forced returns to Afghanistan.

We are deeply concerned by the continued shrinking of space for dissent in **Sri Lanka**, and increased targeting of those raising concern over the Government's Covid-19 response. On top of the target groups Amnesty International [published earlier this year](#), authorities are now cracking down on protesting university students and academic staff, as well as medical practitioners and social commentators who raise issues around the government's Covid-19 response. We urge the government to immediately stop using, and repeal, the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which, despite assurances that it will be amended, remains in use, and continues to be used to detain hundreds for prolonged periods without trial, including government critics. We also urge the repeal of new regulations under the Act which subject suspects to "rehabilitation" and [detention for up to two years without a trial](#).

Finally, Madam President, Amnesty International is deeply concerned by the **Nicaraguan** Government's [increased use of enforced disappearances](#) and arbitrary detention as tools to

silence perceived opponents, journalists and activists. We urge the Nicaraguan authorities to immediately release all those detained for exercising their rights. This Council should monitor the situation closely over the coming months and be ready to develop a more robust response if the situation continues to deteriorate.

Thank you, Madam President.