



26 March 2015

UN Human Rights Council
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Item 10
General Debate

Mr. President,

The Government of Sri Lanka's post Presidential election commitments and its willingness to re-engage with the United Nations human rights mechanisms are hopeful signs that its leaders may be serious about repairing the damage done to human rights and the rule of law in Sri Lanka over decades.

Sri Lanka's formerly adversarial relationship with the United Nations was unhealthy and unproductive. Its new commitment to "prioritize" engagement with OHCHR is promising; it needs to be backed by concrete acts of cooperation, including to determine truth and pursue justice for crimes under international law. Amnesty International cannot stress enough the need for a thorough accounting and justice for the victims of violations and abuses in Sri Lanka.

The realisation of promises of domestic accountability measures and justice system reforms should draw on international technical assistance. Sri Lanka can benefit from the experience with transitional justice acquired by other countries.

Where the OHCHR Inquiry uncovers evidence of crimes under international law by any party to the conflict, a genuine prosecutorial process should deal with those suspected of the crimes in proceedings that conform with international standards, provide truth and reparation for victims and draw on Sri Lankan and international expertise.

Amnesty International strongly encourages Sri Lanka to use the time until the Council considers the OISL report in September 2015 to take specific measures to improve its human rights situation. These include: publishing the names and locations of all detainees and permitting family visits; charging and trying detainees promptly in accordance with international standards or releasing them; repealing the Prevention of Terrorism Act; and acceding to the

International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

This Council should continue to encourage, support and monitor progress in Sri Lanka, and remain vigilant for reprisals against human rights defenders.

Thank you Mr. President.