United Nations Human Rights Council
60th Regular Session
Item 2

Joint Statement in the Interactive Dialogue on the Report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on Promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka

08 September 2025

Mr. President,

While the ICJ, Amnesty International and Forum Asia welcome the broad scope of the High Commissioner's report on Sri Lanka, we remain greatly concerned that the minimal measures taken by the government and those announced recently are not tailored to meet the human rights challenge in the context of ongoing repression against human rights defenders and independent journalists. Critically, they will not be effective in the absence of meaningful reform and concrete progress towards effective accountability for allegations of serious IHL and human rights violations and abuses that may amount to crimes under international law committed during the armed conflict.

A clear example of the discrepancy between announcements and reality concerns the expanded application of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). The PTA continues to be misused against the legitimate work of human rights defenders and journalists. The North-East of the country remains heavily militarized, with activists, families of victims, journalists, and human rights defenders being subjected to systematic surveillance, intimidation, and reprisals. The harassment of journalist Kumanan for his reporting on human rights in the North-East exemplifies the grave risks faced by independent journalists carrying out critical work unwelcome by State authorities.

Some 16 years since the armed conflict ended, there have been no credible steps taken towards accountability. This year at Chemmani, the exhumation of over 240 skeletal remains, including infants, is stark evidence of potential atrocity crimes that require independent international investigation.

We urge the Council and States to meet the need for continued international scrutiny in Sri Lanka and renew in full the mandate of the OHCHR Accountability Project for a minimum of two years, and to encourage progress towards accountability options, including through universal jurisdiction and robust international mechanisms, centered on the rights and dignity of victims and survivors.

Thank you.

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